University of Alberta

Public Consultation Process and Public Policy: A Case Study

by

Margaret Ann Quinney ©

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the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Public Consultation Process and Public Policy: A Case Study** submitted by Margaret Ann Quinney in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration.

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ABSTRACT

During the 1990s, consultation strategies increasingly have been incorporated into policy development processes. This qualitative case study offers an understanding of the development of a policy framework for the 1994 White Paper released by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, paying particular attention to the contribution of consultation to the policy development process. Interviews were conducted with government planners of the consultation or policy processes and with stakeholders who participated in the consultation activities.

The findings indicate that policy development may be conceptualized as a policy cycle comprising a set of processes (policy review, policy options, policy choice, and policy implementation) which are dynamic, interactive, overlapping, and fluid. Consultation can contribute to each policy process, and multiple cycles and processes may be underway concurrently. The transformation of policy-relevant information occurs through analysis and argument, however, the development of policy options can be influenced by other factors.

This study supports Kingdon's (1984) framework of policy making. In a political context, the creation of policy choices may occur through the coupling of policy issues with existing ideas of policy options, especially when a "window of opportunity" is presented. Conceptualizations of policy development from this study are characterized as complex, politicized, flexible, and incorporating stakeholder involvement.

Key areas for attention in consultation planning include specifying the relationship between the consultation and the overall policy decision strategies, developing clear objectives for the consultation, designing the consultations to achieve those objectives,

and aligning strategies and leadership to integrate consultation and policy processes. A combination of consultation methods facilitates a broad basis of stakeholder participation. Multiple consultations, interactive methods, and continuity of participants help to build a relationship with a network of stakeholders.

Consultation can contribute to enhanced communication with stakeholders, broadened views of policy issues, moderated perspectives of policy options, modified policy choices, increased profile for the policy process, and added complexity for the policy arena. Attention to the design of consultation strategy, methods, and materials may facilitate both individual and group learning.

This study offers implications for practice for public-sector managers, educational leaders, and other stakeholders, and identifies areas for further research.

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Table of Contents

Page

1. **Introduction to the Study** 1
Purpose of the Research Study 1
    Research Questions 2
Significance of the Study 3
Research Design and Methodology 4
    Overview 4
    Delimitations and Limitations of the Study 5
    Assumptions 5
Definitions 5
Organization of the Document 6

2. **Literature Review** 7
The Development of Policy Sciences 7
The Policy Process 8
    The Stages Models 8
    Challenge to the Rational Approach 9
    Approaches to Policy Analysis 12
    An Alternative Approach 14
Involvement in the Policy Process 16
    Policy Communities and Stakeholders 16
    Increasing Involvement 17
Consultation and the Policy Process 22
    Consultation to Improve Decision Making 23
    The Consultation Process 27
    Understanding the Consultation Process 29
Organizational Learning 31
    Can Governments Learn? 31
    Learning through Consultation 33
Reform in Higher Education 34
    Canadian Jurisdictions 35
        Newfoundland and Labrador 35
        British Columbia 36
        New Brunswick 37
        Manitoba 37
        Nova Scotia 38
        Ontario 39
    Other Jurisdictions 40
Summary of the Review 41
Research Questions 43

3. Research Design and Methodology 46
Research Design 46
    Case Study Research 47
    This Case Study 48
    Design of the Study 49
Research Methodology 50
    Organizing for the Study 50
        Gaining Access 50
        Preparing for Data Collection 52
            Introducing the Study 52
            Requesting an Interview 54
            The Consent Form 54
            The Interview Guide 55
            The Interview Plan 56
            The Equipment 57
            Data Management Scheme 58
    Data Collection 59
        Data Sources 59
            Individuals 60
            Events 62
            Documents 63
        Data Collection Techniques 64
            Interviewing 64
                Semi-structured interviews 64
                Informal interviews 64
                Elite interviews 64
            Observing 66
                Observation guide 66
                Observer involvement 67
            Analyzing Documents 67
            Recording Field Notes 69
        Conducting the Interviews 69
            Pilot Phase 69
            Gathering Interview Data 70
    Data Management 72
        Organizing the Data 72
            Master Data Files 72
            Interview Transcripts 73
            Data Review 74
    Data Analysis 74
        Case Study Approach 74
        Analyzing the Data 75
            Interview Data 75
            Observation Data 76
            Document Data 77

Field Notes Data 77
Ensuring Trustworthiness 78
Credibility 78
Transferability 79
Dependability 79
Confirmability 80
Research Ethics 80
Ethics Review 80
Ethical Considerations in This Study 81

4. The Process of Public Policy Development: A Case Story 84
Preparation of the Case Story 84
Organizing the Data 84
Creating Case Profiles and the Case Story 84
Member Review of the Case Story 85
Revision of the Case Story 86
The Development of the 1994 White Paper: The Case Story 86
Preparing for Policy Development, Spring 1992 86
Initiating Policy Planning, July - December 1992 88
Political Context, Fall 1992 91
Expanding the Scope of Planning, January 1993 91
Organizing for Consultation, Spring 1993 92
Introducing Business Plans 94
Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation 94
Provincial Election, June 1993 96
Fiscal Planning Workshop, July 1993 97
The Consultation Strategy 99
Round One Consultation, September - October 1993 99
Concurrent Consultations, Fall 1993 102
Budget Roundtable, November 1993 103
Department Business Plan 105
The Visioning Team Reports 105
Policy Writing, January - March 1994 106
Planning Round Two Consultation 107
The Consultation Moderator 108
Round Two Consultation, May 1994 108
Finalizing The White Paper, May - October 1994 109
Obtaining Government Approval 110
Release of the White Paper, October 1994 110

5. Policy Development and Public Consultation Processes 112
Research Questions 113
Referencing the Data 113
Interviews 113
Documents, Observations, and Field Notes 115

Research Questions #1 and #2:
How was policy development structured for this process?
How was public consultation structured for this process? 115
- Initial Planning 117
  - The Work of the Divisional Task Force 117
    - The Think Tank Strategy: Ideas Committee 120
    - The Consultation Strategy: Key Stakeholders . . . 121
    - The Divisional Task Force Preliminary Report . . 122
  - Changes in Political Context and Department Amalgamation 124
- Public Consultation and Roundtables 125
  - Planning for Public Consultation 125
  - Organizing for Consultation Planning 127
    - Committee Structure 127
    - Statement of Objectives for the Consultation . . . 128
    - Developing a Stakeholder Database 129
  - Round One Consultation 130
    - Consultation Documents for Round 1 130
    - Format for Round 1 Sessions 131
    - Public Response to Round 1 132
    - Observation Notes from Round 1 133
      - Red Deer consultation sessions 133
      - Edmonton consultation sessions 135
    - Participant Perceptions of Round 1 137
    - Department Member Perceptions of Round 1 . . . 138
    - Consultation Teams and the Daily Briefings 139
  - Data Management for the Consultation 141
  - Preparing for Budget Consultations 141
    - The July Budget Workshop 141
  - Budget Roundtable 142
    - Participants for the Budget Roundtable 142
    - Consultation Document for the Budget Roundtable 143
    - Format for Roundtable Sessions 143
    - Perceptions of the Process of Roundtable 144
    - Information from the Budget Roundtable 146
- Consultation and the White Paper 147
  - Round Two Consultation 147
    - Planning for Consultation 147
      - “Public Face” for the consultation 147
      - Role of Moderator 148
      - Improving the consultation process 148
    - Consultation Documents for Round 2 149
      - The Options Paper 149
      - Draft White Paper 150

Consultation Strategy for Round 2 153
Selecting Participants for Round 2 154
Consultation Documents for Round 2 155
Format for Round 2 Consultation 155
Observation Notes from Round 2 156
Edmonton Round 2 sessions 156
Calgary Round 2 sessions 158
Perceptions of Round 2 159
Department Staff Member Consultation 161
Communications and the Consultation Process 162
The Newsletter: Keeping You Informed 162
Communication Strategy 162
Preparing the White Paper 164
Round 2 Outcomes 164
Analysis of Round 2 Information 164
Write and Rewrite 165
Ministerial Support for Policy Options 166
Approval Process for the White Paper 166
Release of the White Paper 167
Research Question #3:
What were the emerging issues with the consultation process? 168
Developing the Relationship Between Public Consultation and Policy Development Processes 168
Timing and Sequencing of the Processes in Round 1 168
Approach to Consultation 170
Objectives for the Consultation and Purpose of Round 1 171
The Outcome 172
Aligning the Budget Roundtable With the Public Consultation Process 173
Introduction of Budget Consultations 173
Aligning the Budget Roundtable and Public Consultation Processes 174
Maintaining the Credibility of the Public Consultation Process 176
Budget Consultations and the Development of the Business Plan 176
Public Perceptions of the Legitimacy of the Process 179
Integrating the Processes of Public Consultation and Policy Development 181
Staffing Strategy 181
Information Management Strategy 181
Coordination Strategy 182

Communication Strategy 183
Research Question #4:
In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process? . . 184
Enhanced Communication 185
Broadened Views Held of Policy Issues 186
Moderated Perspectives of the Policy Options 188
Modified Outcomes for Policy Choices 189
Increased Profile for the Policy Process 190
Intensified Complexity of the Policy Arena 192
Research Question #5:
What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development? 193
Continued Consultation 193
Increased Inclusiveness 194
Increased Complexity 195
Focus on Outcomes 195
Flexibility and Adaptability 195
Public Involvement 196
Summary 196

6. **Summary and Conclusions** 198
An Overview of the Study 198
Research Questions 198
Research Design and Methodology 199
Discussion 199
Research Question #1:
How was policy development structured for this process? 200
The Stages Model 200
A Policy Development Cycle 200
Strategic Vision 201
Producing Policy-relevant Information 202
Political Context 202
Transforming Policy-relevant Information 203
Problems, Proposals, and Politics 204
Research Question #2:
How was public consultation structured for this process? 205
Increasing Consultation 205
Stakeholder Participation in Policy Development 206
Research Question #3:
What were the emerging issues with the consultation process? 207
Issues with the Consultation Process 208
Consultation and Policy Processes 208
Consultation Objectives 209
Consultation Design and Objectives 209
Aligning Strategy and Leadership 210

Research Question #4:
In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process? . . 212
Research Question #5:
What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development? 213
Consultation and Learning 213
Individual Learning 213
Cooperative Learning 214
Organizational Learning 214
Reflections on Methodology 215
Conclusions 218
1. How was policy development structured for this process? . . 218
2. How was public consultation structured for this process? . . . 219
3. What were the emerging issues with the consultation process? 220
4. In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process? 221
5. What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development? 221
Implications of the Study 221
Contributions to Knowledge 221
Implications for Practice 223
Implications for Further Research 224
Concluding Comment 225

Bibliography 226

Appendices

A. Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation-- Schematic of the Process 236
B. Public Policy and Consultation Process Chronology of Events . . 238
C. Terms of Reference: 245
Steering Committee 246
Operations Committee 249
Project Secretariat 252
D. Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation Project Organization 254
E. Adult Learning: Access through Innovation Consultation Statement of Objectives - September 1993 . 256
F. Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning, 1993 262

List of Tables

Page

Table 1:
Interviewee Profile: Internal and External to Government 70

Table 2:
Involvement in Policy Process: Interviewees Internal to Government 71

Table 3:
Involvement in Policy Process: Interviewees External to Government 71

Table 4:
Scheduling of the Interviews 72

Table 5:
Proposed Time Lines and Activities for Public Consultation, April 1993 169

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Daily news reports in the early 1990s revealed that Canadian governments at all levels were facing serious challenges with reduced resources and continuing or increasing demands. In the Province of Alberta, politicians and officials of government departments were attempting to balance the realities of competing priorities, reduced financial resources, and future requirements. Government responses to meet these changing circumstances are frequently set forth in either new or revised public policy.

During 1993 government departments in Alberta initiated a series of consultations and "roundtable" discussions with the public and stakeholder groups to solicit input into policy discussions. While consultative approaches have been used in the past, there now appeared to be an increased enthusiasm on the part of the Government of Alberta to facilitate public involvement through consultation during the review or development of public policy.

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development (AAECD) was one provincial government department which undertook a broadly-based process of policy review and strategic planning. An initial review of the policy literature raised the question of whether traditional conceptualizations of the process of policy formulation adequately reflected the realities of the process as it was undertaken by AAECD. A research study to understand the Department's consultative approach in its policy process for the adult learning system was, therefore, timely.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study was to provide an increased understanding of the process of developing the policy framework for the White Paper released by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in October 1994. During this study, particular attention was paid to the contribution of public consultation to the process. A secondary purpose for this study was to advance the theoretical knowledge of the public consultation process and the public policy process by describing and analyzing this case.

The study focused on the activities of the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and later on the activities of the amalgamated Department of Advanced Education and Career Development through an exploration of the antecedents to the development of the discussion papers distributed by AAECD in September 1993; by examining the planning for the various consultation activities; and by following the process through the development of the White Paper to its release in October 1994. The time line for this process and the key activities were presented to the public graphically in the AAECD newsletter (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, Summer; Appendix A).

Research Questions

The policy issues under consideration by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development were major issues. According to Dunn (1981), major policy issues are those "which typically involve questions about the nature and purposes of government organizations" (p. 102). Such problems are very complex, interdependent, dynamic, and thus "messy" and real-world (Mitroff, 1983). This study maintained a focus, however, on the process of policy development and the role played by public consultation, rather than a focus on the substance or content of the policy outcome. The context for the study reflected a reality which was complex, interdependent, and dynamic.

This qualitative study addressed the following general question:

> *What was the process undertaken by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development to develop the 1994 White Paper?*

These specific research questions guided the study:

1. *How was policy development structured for this process?*
2. *How was public consultation structured for this process?*
3. *What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?*
4. *In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?*

5. *What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?*

Significance of the Study

In order for individuals to influence educational policy, it is helpful to have an understanding of the process by which it is made. In an earlier study of educational policy making by an Alberta government department, Bosetti (1986) identified the need to examine the consultative approach further in order to "facilitate a better understanding of the process, and perhaps enhance and enlighten future participation in the process of policy formulation" (p. 6). This current study on public consultation and the policy process will contribute to enhancing that understanding of the process and its implications for participation in policy development.

There has been a dramatic increase in the use of public consultation as a component of the policy development process. Sterne (1997) has written of the changing relationship between government and Canadians and has noted the increasing expectation of citizens for public consultation:

> Not long ago, governments managed public affairs with little direct input or even involvement of citizens, and they did so with public concurrence. Those days are gone. Not only are the problems now facing society beyond the capacity of governments alone to resolve, but people want to be involved in dealing with these issues. (p. 1)

This study will contribute to the small but growing Canadian literature on case study research on the policy and consultation processes.

As well, this study will hold significance for the field of educational administration. The Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development and its policies provide the context for the adult learning system in the Province. An understanding of the process of policy development as undertaken in this case will contribute to the insight and understanding of policy for administrators.

The findings of this study will also contribute to the knowledge of public policy in the Canadian context. The study is a contemporary one of policy formulation in progress. The description and analysis of the policy process may be instructive to policy makers in a variety of settings as they consider future policy development.

Research Design and Methodology

Overview

A qualitative case study research strategy was selected to guide the exploration of the public consultation and policy process followed by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development during the development of the 1994 White Paper. Three streams of activities were incorporated within the design of this study which, although conducted concurrently for much of the duration of the study, were introduced sequentially. The first stream involved a review of the literature. The initial review focused primarily on the domains of policy studies and qualitative inquiry. The review of the literature of qualitative inquiry continued throughout the entire study to inform the methodology and procedures. As patterns emerged from the findings of the study, a further exploration of the policy literature was undertaken.

The second stream of activity focused on the collection of data. The primary qualitative methods employed to gather data were interviewing, observing, analyzing documents and records, and recording field notes. Interviews were conducted with selected government staff members and other stakeholders of this policy process. The interviews were dependent on the willingness of the individuals to share with me their perceptions of and reflections on the process under study. Observations of specific events and activities connected with the policy process were undertaken. Documents and records related to the study were reviewed and gathered for analysis. Field notes were recorded throughout the course of the study.

The third stream of activity of data analysis was overlapping with and integrated throughout the data collection. This involved paying attention to the requirements for organizing and managing the volume of qualitative data gathered during a study of this kind. To examine the data for completeness, a case chronology (Appendix B) and a narrative case story were prepared. The interview, observation, field notes, and document data were further analyzed and interpreted to identify topics, patterns and issues.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study was delimited or bounded in specific ways. The case itself was time bound by the planning of activities of the Department of Advanced Education which began in July 1992 and concluded with the release by the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development of the White Paper in October 1994. This was a study of the process undertaken by one government department, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, and focused upon the process leading to the 1994 White Paper.

Among the limitations to this study I have identified the following:

- the extent to which key participants and stakeholders were able to accurately recall the events and perceptions which were relevant to this policy development process and were willing to relate these to me,

- the findings of this study were based on one case study and may not be generalizable to other situations, and

- the study was conducted by only one researcher.

Assumptions

This study was proposed based on the assumptions that appropriate and adequate access to staff members and to data would be provided to me by the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. I also held to the assumption that data which I gathered through interviewing key policy process participants, observing specific activities and events, analyzing documents related to the process, and recording descriptive and analytic field notes would contribute to an in-depth understanding of the process.

Definitions

The following terms and definitions are used throughout this study.

- Adult Learning System: The adult learning system in Alberta includes the complete spectrum of education and training activities carried out in post secondary institutions, in the workplace, and in the community. (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Summer, p. 3)

- *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation*: is part of a strategic planning process designed to involve Albertans in defining a new direction for adult learning into the twenty-first century. The goals of this process are to increase access to learning opportunities and improve the responsiveness of Alberta's adult education and training system while reducing costs through innovative approaches. (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Summer, pp. 1 & 3)

- 1994 White Paper: a policy framework and action plan to guide the development of adult learning in Alberta for the next decade. (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Summer, p. 5)

- Public policy: a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems. (Pal, 1987, p. 4)

Organization of the Document

This document is divided into six chapters. The first chapter outlines the introduction to the study. The next two chapters provide a theoretical orientation to this research study with an overview of literature relevant to this study and the research design and research methodology for the study.

The fourth chapter presents the study through a case story. This descriptive approach will introduce and orient the reader to case. The case story is supported by a chronology of events in the Appendices. The fifth chapter displays the data from the study in response to the research questions in a manner that reflects the “voices” of the participants in the study as they present their own perspectives and understandings of processes and events. The sixth chapter contains a summary of the study along with a discussion of the findings and implications from this policy study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this study is drawn primarily from the fields of policy studies, educational policy, and qualitative research. The policy literature is presented within this chapter; the qualitative research literature is integrated within the chapter on Research Design and Methodology. The literature reviewed early in this study contributed to building my own understanding of the domain of policy sciences and its development, and to placing this case study within the larger context of educational reform and policy change. As the study progressed, patterns emerged from the data through analysis. To understand these patterns, I returned to the literature with a focus this time on policy analysis and policy making.

In this chapter, the policy process and the evolution of the "stages" models of policy development are examined. Challenges to the "conventional" or rational approach to policy development which began to emerge by the mid-1980s are presented along with some alternative views of the policy process. A trend surfacing at the same time, which calls for an increase in the involvement of stakeholders in the policy process, is identified. This growing phenomena of consultation as a component of the policy process is noted along with some research on consultation as a process. The role of organizational learning in the policy process is explored. This literature review concludes with an overview of the varying approaches to policy review and development as undertaken during the 1990s by provincial governments across Canada.

The Development of Policy Sciences

Policy sciences are concerned with "two separable though entwined frames of reference: knowledge *of* the policy process; knowledge *in* the process" (Lasswell, 1970, p. 3). In practice, policy analysis and policy making have been around for centuries. However, the first systematic appeal to develop a special orientation of "policy sciences" within the domain of social sciences was articulated by Harold Lasswell in 1951. Lasswell outlined the purpose of the policy sciences as not simply to contribute to the making of more efficient decisions but also to provide knowledge needed to improve the practice of democracy. Lasswell's vision was to bring together both science and values in this approach.

The early work in the field leaned heavily, however, to a scientific approach as the development of the policy sciences came from the activities of engineers, operations researchers, systems analysts, and applied mathematicians who had been trained outside the social sciences (Dunn, 1981; Majone, 1989). This particular orientation toward policy added "rigorous" procedures for testing alternatives to determine and choose the best and most efficient actions. This rational and technocratic focus along with a positivist logic of inquiry dominated the policy field through to the 1980s.

The Policy Process

The Stages Models

By far the most influential conception of the policy process was that advanced by Harold Lasswell. Lasswell (1970) differentiated a series of functional activities or phases in the policy decision process: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination, and appraisal. The policy process in Lasswell's view was sequential, differentiated by function, and cumulative (Nakamura, 1987). Nakamura indicated that the process was viewed as: sequential in the sense that one stage led to the next; differentiated functionally in that each stage represented a distinctive activity required by a system to move to the next stage; and cumulative in that each round of activities produced results that are fed back into the process (p. 142). Weiss (1982) also characterized this "conventional view" of policy formulation as bounded, purposeful, significant and sequential.

Pal (1987) presented a simple model of the policy process also based on five stages: problem definition or issue identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, and policy evaluation. Although the stages were similar to those of Lasswell, this process, according to Pal, was interactive in that it looped cyclically and continuously through its phases. Policy evaluation fed information back into the definition of problems and agenda setting (p.116).

In offering a model for the general policy process, Doern and Phidd (1992) observed that, to a certain extent in practice, a policy problem does go through several stages which include: identification, definition, alternative search, choice, implementation, and evaluation (feedback and learning) (p. 83). They concluded their discussion of this model by commenting that in reality there are several policy processes operating concurrently in government and that a full understanding of the making of public policy demands that one examine the dynamics of policy making.

The "policy stages" frameworks were inspired by the early work of Lasswell during the 1950s. Various scholars provided explanations of the stages models similar to that put forward by Nakamura (1987) and Weiss (1982). Sabatier (1992) indicated that these models divided the policy process into several stages--agenda setting, formulation and adoption, implementation, and evaluation. He acknowledged that the stages models had been helpful in dividing the complex policy process into more manageable units of analysis but noted that researchers had tended to focus on one of the stages with little recognition of work in other stages (p. 31). According to Sabatier, the rational model or stages approach had outlived its usefulness because it "is not really a causal theory" (p. 31). Sabatier pointed out that there are no coherent assumptions about what forces drive the process from stage to stage. Criticism of the stages models grew.

Challenge to the Rational Approach

The rational perspective of policy development presented an ideal. Within the past decade the criticism of the rational model and its reliance on positivistic inquiry has come to the forefront of discussions in the policy literature (Healy, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Torgerson, 1986; Stone, 1988; Fischer, 1989; Brunner, 1991; Doron, 1992; Hendrick & Nachmias, 1992). Just as the field of educational administration experienced a challenge to its early reliance on a positivist, technical orientation which split facts from values, so too the field of policy sciences was challenged and in the throes of debate (Evers &

Lakomski, 1991; Jennings, 1987).

The influence of this rational approach in the field of policy sciences was reflected in the adherence to the rational decision making model which offered an ideal perspective on how policy was formulated. The step-like process included identifying the policy problem, clarifying and ranking goals, examining all alternatives, forecasting the consequences of alternatives, comparing alternatives and their consequences, and selecting the alternative which maximized the goals (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1967).

Majone (1989) examined this rational approach to the policy process and offered his critique. Schlar (as cited in Majone, 1989) defined "decisionism" as "the vision of a limited number of political actors engaged in making calculated choices among clearly conceived alternatives" (p. 12). Majone concluded that an actor's choices would always be considered rational if the choices could be explained as the best means to achieve given objectives. Majone identified the following limitations to decisionism: the assumption of a single decision maker, the lack of concern for process, the failure to distinguish among classes of decisions, and the failure to recognize the role of argument and persuasion in decision making (pp. 15-23). He put forward the view that policy analysis had less to do with formal techniques of problem solving than with the process of argument. An adequate theory of policy development required, in his view, that "attention be paid to ideas, theories, and arguments as well as to technology, economics, and politics. Analysis and arguments conceptualize, and thus transform, the institutions and the process of policy making" (p. 166).

Nakamura (1987) had recognized that the real world process often does not fit the sequence of stages envisaged. Doern and Phidd (1992) noted that it has become fashionable and, in part, valid to reject the rational model following the argument that most decisions and policies are not in fact made that way. But Doern and Phidd claimed that the model remained important since "it supplies for many policy actors and organizations a general, albeit vague, standard against which many decisions and policies and the policy process as a whole are tested in a rough-and-ready way" (p. 5).

The dissatisfaction with policy sciences and policy analysis stemmed in part from the rejection of politics from the rational model. Stone (1988) referred to the dominance of the rational orientation as the "rationality project" and noted that the rational model failed to capture what was the essence of policy making in political communities: the struggle over ideas. In his review, Benveniste (1989) wrote that the policy analysis and planning activity that, at first, was thought to be technical and scientific had evolved over time and was now "clearly perceived to be value laden and political" (p. 38).

Another group of scholars (Fischer, 1980; Fischer & Forester, 1987; Torgerson, 1986) addressed the limits of this rational approach of policy analysis and its emphasis on efficiency and value neutrality. Amy (1987) described policy analysts as portraying themselves as technical advisors whose analysis was value-free and apolitical. He suggested that the unquestioned faith of social scientists in the positivist approach to analysis seemed to suggest that "a value-free, technocratic approach to policy issues was possible" (p. 56). Kelly (1986) noted, that along with a loss of confidence in methods, came a recognition that values were an integral part of policy inquiry. The issue really revolved around the extent and fashion in which policy analysts must deal with values. Among the commonalities in new approaches to policy inquiry in the 1980s, Kelly identified the introduction of values in the analysis process and the use of qualitative analyses to establish the context and boundaries of the inquiry (p. 527).

Dunn (1981) had begun to address this shift around values by asserting that policy studies must include evaluative and normative analysis as well as empirical analysis. The separation of fact and value and the compartmentalization of values did not, according to Dunn, advance either policy analysis or decision making. Dunn did not, however, place values centrally in his approach nor demonstrate how values would influence policy inquiry.

During the mid-1980s, Torgerson (1985) wrote that "current developments in the policy literature reflect some disillusionment with the conventional positivist framework of analysis" (p. 242). Lincoln and Guba (1986) presented a functional definition for policy analysis and stated the case for the naturalistic paradigm as a basis for inquiry in policy analysis as both appropriate and warranted. By the mid-1980s the interpretive paradigm was becoming more accepted as an influential model in the social sciences. Healy (1986) noted that the interpretive paradigm had now begun to exert an influence on the policy domain as well and he supported interpretive inquiry as an alternative approach to addressing policy problems.

In more recent examinations, some scholars have explored metaphorical representations of the complexities of the policy process. Many of these metaphors are implicitly built into theoretical frameworks. Dobuzinskis (1992) argued that the commonly used metaphors based on the notion of control have ceased to be relevant to the analysis of contemporary policy dilemmas. These models emphasized stability, control, and/ or homeostasis in the context of a deterministic universe. The emerging models emphasize "evolutionary dynamics, chaotic fluctuation, autonomy and spontaneous adjustments in the context of a more or less explicitly non-deterministic universe, itself made up of culturally and individually constructed worlds" (p. 356). According to Dobuzinskis this paradigmatic shift signalled a move away from the technocratic certainties of earlier approaches and reflected the "recognition that societal actors at every level have important insights to contribute to the policy process" (p. 356).

Generally, the critiques over time have questioned the adequacy of the rational model of policy to address the increasing complexity of policy problems confronting policy analysts (Majone, 1989; Dobuzinskis, 1992), the appropriateness of the value-neutral stance (Fischer & Forester, 1987), and the failure to account for the political dimensions of the policy process (Stone, 1988; Benveniste, 1989). The growing discontent with the positivist bias as a basis for policy inquiry provided the opportunity for other models to evolve and for alternative approaches to policy formulation to gain support.

Approaches to Policy Analysis

Over the years, the field of political science developed a number of models to help understand political life. In his work, *Understanding Public Policy*, Dye (7th ed., 1992) presented nine models from the literature of political science and applied these models to the study of public policy. None of the models was derived especially to study public policy but each offered a separate way of thinking about or analyzing policy. The models presented by Dye included: institutional model, process model, group model, elite model, rational model, incremental model, game theory model, public choice model, and systems model.

Dye (1992) indicated that each model provided a separate focus and could help us to understand different things about public policy. However, he also indicated that in reality "most policies are a combination of rational planning, incrementalism, interest group activity, elite preferences, systematic forces, game-playing, public choice, political processes, and institutional influences" (p. 21). The overview of models provided by Dye clearly presented public policy and its development as a political activity and offered a foundation from which to further explore approaches to the development of public policy.

Dunn (1981) presented a framework for policy analysis. He defined policy analysis as an "applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems" (p. 34). In his framework, Dunn incorporated six policy-analytic methods: problem structuring, monitoring, forecasting, evaluation, recommendation, and practical inference (pp. 39- 40). Each of these methods was used to produce and transform policy information. According to Dunn, problem structuring as a method was the least understood of the methods as problems seldom emerge fully defined but rather are structured in different ways and require analyses and re-analyses. Dunn indicated that providing information about policy problems entailed the most critical task in policy analysis, since the way a problem was defined governs our ability to search out and identify appropriate solutions (p. 44).

Dunn (1981) also included in his framework five types of policy-relevant information which he saw to be related and interdependent and these were: policy problems, policy alternatives, policy actions, policy outcomes, and policy performance. Dunn's model, then, presented five stages: structuring policy problems, forecasting policy alternatives, recommending policy actions, monitoring policy outcomes, and evaluating policy performance.

In discussing his framework, Dunn (1981) indicated that the process of policy analysis illustrated in the framework was designed for methodological purposes and presented a logical reconstruction of the process of policy analysis. The actual process of doing policy analysis, he emphasized, may or may not conform to this logical reconstruction. However, Dunn suggested that the logic-in-use of practising analysts may reflect wide variations that stem both from the personal characteristics of the analysts and the institutional settings in which they work. Further, Dunn indicated that although the central direction of policy analysis conformed to the series of transformations described (i.e., problems, then alternatives, then actions, then outcomes or performance, then problems, etc.), the actual process of analysis may at times involve forward and backward movements between informational components.

Dunn (1981) offered advice to the policy analyst and researcher concerning the utilization of the outcomes of the policy analysis process:

> The use of multiple methods to produce policy-relevant information and reasoned arguments does not guarantee that the products of policy analysis will be utilized by policy makers. Policy analysis is essentially a *cognitive* process while policy making is a *political* one. Many factors other than methodology shape the ways that policy analysis is utilized by policy makers: the structure of political power; the political feasibility of recommended alternatives; time and resource constraints; the form and content of information; and the characteristics of policy makers themselves. Under such conditions the analyst must not only make appropriate use of policy-analytic methods . . . but may also be required to function as an agent of planned social change. To do so the analyst must win the cooperation and assistance of persons who affect and are affected by a given policy. (pp. 45-46, italics in original)

An Alternative Approach

Kingdon (1984) contributed what he described as an oversimplified version of public policy making in which it could be considered as a set of processes including at least: the setting of the agenda, the specification of alternatives from which a choice is to be made, an authoritative choice among those specified alternatives, and the implementation of the decision (p. 3). He cautioned, however, that success in one process did not necessarily imply success in others.

Kingdon based his research on policy making on the work of Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) who had sought to understand organizations which they described as "organized anarchies". Cohen et al. saw running through such organizations or decision structures four separate streams: problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. Each stream had a life of its own, largely unrelated to the others. They described these organizations as "a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision makers looking for work" (p. 2). Cohen et al. drew the analogy of the choice opportunity as being like a "garbage can" into which various kinds of problems and solutions were dumped by participants as they were generated.

Drawing on this research, Kingdon (1984) conceptualized policy making as involving three kinds of processes or streams which flowed through the organization: a problem stream of information consisting of policy problems; a solution stream of policy proposals floating about in the organization; and a political stream consisting of political activities and aspects. According to Kingdon, "these streams are largely independent of one another and each develops according to its own dynamics and rules. But at some critical juncture the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics" (p. 20). This joining was seen to occur when a "window of opportunity" opens.

Kingdon likened ideas floating around in a community of policy specialists much as molecules floated around in what biologists called the "primeval soup" before life came into being. He offered the following view:

> Ideas become prominent and then fade. There is a long process of "softening up": ideas are floated, bills introduced, speeches made; proposals are drafted, then amended in response to reaction and floated again. Ideas confront one another . . . and combine with one another in various ways. The "soup" changes not only through the appearance of wholly new elements, but even more by the recombination of previously existing elements. While many ideas float around in this policy primeval

> soup, the ones that last, as in a natural selection system, meet some criteria. Some ideas survive and prosper; some proposals are taken more seriously than others. (p. 123)

Kingdon's approach provided a significant departure from the stages models of policy making. His model allowed for the influence of political processes and events as well as the influence of "ideas" which floated around as policy proposals.

Involvement in the Policy Process

Policy Communities and Stakeholders

Among other notions, Kingdon (1984) introduced to his model the concept of policy communities which were composed of specialists in a given policy area. This involvement of the policy community in the discussions concerning policy served to broaden participation in the policy process overall. The idea of a policy community developed from studies documenting the interactions of actors around policy issues (Heclo, 1978). The term "issue network", coined by Heclo, has sometimes been used to describe a configuration of individuals concerned about a particular aspect of an issue, while the term "policy community" has been used more broadly to encompass the collection of issue networks within a jurisdiction (Michaels, 1992). Lindquist (1991) described Heclo's formulation of issue networks as capturing the changing external reality of public managers in the Canadian context and the ever increasing web of interdependencies between governmental and societal actors.

Research on policy implementation has reported the involvement of numerous government and community organizations and agencies, as well as individuals (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989). The concept of a policy subsystem made up of "actors" from different levels of government as well as legislative committees, interest groups, members of the media, and researchers involved in the policy process has been developed by a number of scholars (Heclo, 1978; Kingdon, 1984; Sabatier, 1988).

Based on his work with those who were making strategy, policy, and plans, Mitroff (1983) observed that of the forces affecting corporations and organizations, many forces were seemingly beyond the control of those organizations. Among these forces, he included stakeholders which he defined in the following way:

> Stakeholders are all those interest groups, parties, actors, claimants and institutions--both internal and external to the corporation--that exert a hold on it. That is, stakeholders are all those parties who either affect or who are affected by a corporation's actions, behaviour, and policies. (p. 4)

Mitroff's definition emphasized a two-way influence between the organization and its stakeholders, as well as those who are both internal and external to the organization. He also presented a framework for identifying or uncovering stakeholders and offered techniques for mapping their interests. His framework presented seven approaches to stimulate the thinking of practitioners about the kinds of stakeholders that may exist in various situations. He categorized the approaches as having a focus as follows: imperative, positional, reputational, social-participation, opinion-leadership, demographic, and focal organization. He recommended that organizations use all the approaches in thinking about their environment, as one approach would identify stakeholders missed by another approach. Mitroff cautioned, however, that

> There are no definite limits to the number of techniques that one could use to generate a set of stakeholders relevant to any given organizational problem. It must be kept in mind that we are dealing with complex, messy systems. As a result we do not obtain the kind of closure and definitiveness that one does in simple closed systems. (pp. 32-33)

Increasing Involvement

By the mid-1980s there was an increasing call for methods of policy inquiry to provide for greater involvement and participation of policy communities and stakeholders. To accompany their support for the adoption of naturalistic inquiry within the field of policy studies, Lincoln and Guba (1986) proposed a new definition for policy analysis:

> *Policy analysis* is a type of *disciplined inquiry* undertaken to *gather* and *display evidence* (including *contextual data*) for and against *alternative policy options (intended, already implemented,* or *experienced*) in order to *inform negotiations over choices* in terms of the *multiple values* of *relevant audiences.* (p. 557, capitalization in the original has been converted to italics)

Lincoln and Guba presented several implications for their definition including that: policy analysis is to be directed to multiple audiences; policy analysis facilitates choice and choice is value mediated through political negotiation; context variables must be taken into account embedding decisions in the data of local contexts; negotiation processes can, do, and should occur in policy making and implementation; and results of policy analysis must be moved into arenas appropriate for display and debate (pp. 557-559).

Lincoln and Guba indicated that negotiations between policy makers, analysts, and clients represented appropriate, fair, and respectful ways in which to proceed in building policy. They reminded policy analysts that responsive evaluation was to be the focus for policy evaluation and that implied both the identification of "stakeholding audiences" and interacting with those audiences to discover their claims or concerns. Lincoln and Guba urged the involvement of clients and stakeholders and the opening up of the policy process.

Majone (1989) has written about the role of public deliberation and argumentation in policy making. His claim was that we miss a great deal if we try to understand policy making solely in terms of power, influence and bargaining to the exclusion of debate and argument. He has described the process of argumentation and laid out some of its potential contribution to the policy process.

> Argumentation is the key process through which citizens and policy makers arrive at moral judgements and policy choices. Public discussion mobilizes the knowledge, experience, and interest of many people, while focusing their attention on a limited range of issues. Each participant is encouraged to adjust his view of reality, and even to change his values, as a result of the process of reciprocal persuasion. In this way, discussion can produce results that are beyond the capabilities of authoritarian or technocratic methods of policy making. (p. 2)

Majone described a general technique of critical discourse referred to as *dialectic* which was developed by the ancient Greeks. The starting point of a dialectic argument was those points of view already present in the community; its conclusion was a shared understanding of the issue under discussion. For the Greeks, dialectic had three main uses: "first, as a method of critical inquiry; second, as a technique for arguing in favour of one's own opinions and as a procedure for clarifying controversial issues; and finally, as an educational process that transforms the common man into an informed citizen and the specialist into a person able to communicate with his fellow citizens" (p. 6). Majone maintained that good policy analysis was more than data analysis or a modelling exercise, that policy analysis also provided standards of argument and an intellectual structure for public discourse. The dialectic could provide for mutual learning through discourse.

In building his case for an interpretive policy inquiry, Healy (1986) actually placed many of his arguments within the writings of Fay (1976), Fischer (1980), and Habermas (1971) raising the question of whether Healy was actually presenting a critical inquiry approach rather an interpretive inquiry approach. Nevertheless, Healy made the case for the direct involvement of those actors affected by the policy discussions:

> It must involve the direct *participation* of those who stand to be affected by social change. This, in turn, requires the existence of free and open channels of communication between policy experts and the affected actors. . . . The purpose of such discourse in the policy context is to generate a debate about the problem situation and its potential solutions with a view to formulating, and argumentatively justifying, a range of policy actions which have the approval of the actors themselves. To achieve this goal, it is not sufficient that the policy expert to consult the actors only at the outset of the process, rather mutual consultation must be ongoing throughout the entire operation. The recurring requirement here is that the actors themselves be actively involved in all stages of the policy process, and that changes be effected only in accordance with their enlightened self understanding. (pp. 386-387, italics in original)

deLeon (1992) noted that support for participation in the policy process was increasing as policy scholars presented a conceptual basis for broadening the involvement of relevant stakeholders in "participatory policy analysis" (p. 389). Critical planning theory and phenomenology now provided new conceptualizations of planning and policy analysis (Benveniste, 1989).

Reich (1988a) approached policy making from a philosophical perspective and outlined the need for a set of first principles to suggest what good policy making is all about. He reiterated that the "prevailing view" of policy making, i.e., the rational approach to policy decision making, ignored important values and the role of ideas about what was good for society and the importance of debating the relative merits of such ideas (p. 3). Reich supported the arguments of Majone (1988) regarding the importance of democratic deliberation for refining and altering such visions over time and for mobilizing public action around them.

Reich (1988b) underscored the importance of the role of managers in public administration to stimulate public deliberating over what was good for society rather than for the managers to simply determine public policy. Reich claimed that facilitating this civic discovery or public learning was as important a part of the public managers' job as policy making, because the public had to understand and decide for itself what value to place on certain issues lying within that manager's domain (p. 153). He cautioned, however, that public deliberation could take up an inordinate amount of time and resources and could also easily cycle out of control.

> There is no guarantee that the resulting social learning will yield a clear consensus at the end. Instead, the process may exacerbate divisions within the community and make it more difficult to achieve consensus in the future. . . . The experience of public deliberation is not likely to be enjoyable for either politicians or agency employees. Politicians will resent a process that is beyond their control, often involving issues they would rather not have to deal with. (pp. 154-155)

In his writing on the politics of planning, Benveniste (1989) used the terms planning and policy analysis interchangeably. Benveniste described the process of planning as often being "integrative" referring to the integration of consultation with the policy process which provided policy analysts and implementers and beneficiaries with the opportunity to exchange information and to reach agreements. He indicated that policy analysis or planning

> may not always resolve all conflicts, but the search for consensus implicit in the . . . process may clarify issues, delineate options, and provide a modicum of legitimacy for decisions. Therefore, investing in planning or policy analysis may not only lead to new or better solutions. It may also be a way of arriving at an agreement as to what to do. The lesson for planners is clear. At times, it is more important to resolve a complex issue than to achieve some abstract concept of optimization. (p. 16)

Benveniste (1989) further proposed that the policy process could be used to seek consensus while individuals learn to adapt.

> [The policy process] can be used to link and inform individuals while change is discussed. It can be designed flexibly, and it can rely on informal networks of communication. . . . In these situations, planning serves an organizational learning function. The lesson for planners is that the way organizations learn and adapt is central to the success of planning. (p. 17)

Benveniste (1989) identified three functions for participation in the planning and policy processes. First, participation which was mandated in the planning process through legislation served in a watchdog function. Secondly, participation provided the mechanism to ensure the democratization of planning and thus to permit those affected to have a voice in the decision process. Thirdly, participation may be used to involve the community in the task and to channel its energy in joint endeavours, often referred to as co-production (p. 45).

The dilemma of planning, as pointed out by Benveniste (1989), is that planning cannot succeed without some participation but at the same time the process cannot afford to be dominated by the participatory process (p. 45). In an assessment that was similar in some respects to that of Reich (1988), Benveniste indicated that there are several reasons why policy analysts and planners avoid participatory approaches: these are time and resource consuming; these are too demanding on participants; these require considerable openness and disclosure; and the planners lack training in participatory management (1989, p. 47).

Benveniste (1989) also focused attention on networking. He pointed out that networking is most relevant in dealing with difficult planning situations--that is, situations which have "wicked" or "messy" problems (Dunn, 1981; Mitroff, 1983). Networking was defined by Benveniste as the linking of relevant stakeholders through formal and informal channels so as to bring about [policy] formulation and implementation (p. 157). He pointed out that networks are communication channels and may or may not be part of the formal organization. Benveniste outlined several networking tasks as part of the planning and policy process. Among these was the task of floating the initial image to create an awareness of and belief in new ways of thinking and acting (p. 170). He identified several functions to be served through floating the image. Until the idea is floated, however, it is difficult to assess reactions and opposition. The policy ideas proposed may reflect emerging changes and may be ahead of the accepted conventional wisdom, and so it is important to send up "trial balloons" to gauge the reaction (p. 191).

Other writers such as Mintzberg (1994) have described a learning approach to creating policy or organizational strategy. Mintzberg outlined several schools of thought on strategy formation. He indicated that a learning approach to strategy formation relied on the involvement of a variety of actors capable of experimenting and then integrating. In his view, a formal planning approach, a visionary approach, and a learning approach must work in concert. However, he cautioned that an overemphasis on planning tended to drive out the other two. He commented that "with the disappearance of the visionary approach goes vision itself, as broad, integrated strategic perspectives get reduced to narrow, decomposed strategic positions" (p. 209).

Consultation and the Policy Process

By the early 1990s the calls for a broader base of participation in the policy process resulted in a significant increase in consultation to assist with decision making and policy development (Patterson, Lohin, & Ferguson, 1992; Montgomerie, 1994; McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994). Research interest in the use of consultation in decision making also increased. Patterson et al. (1992) discussed the growing phenomena of consultation:

> Consulting people is not a new idea. Few decisions are made without some form of consultation. . . .
>
> What is new is the growing prominence and frequency of consultation activities, particularly those that involve large numbers of participants. People are being consulted more often, in more ways and on more subjects than ever before. Through such mechanisms as calls for briefs, public hearings, symposia, surveys, 1-800 numbers, talk shows, and more recently, through nationally televised electronic town meetings, people are being invited to participate in the decision making processes that affect them. (p. 2)

Consultation to Improve Decision Making

A research paper was developed for the Canadian Centre for Management Development to determine how decisions could be enhanced by consultation (Patterson et al., 1992). The paper focused on four related areas: the importance of clarifying the objectives of consultation and of ensuring that participants understand why they are being consulted; the importance of maintaining the relationship between the consultation objectives and the overall decision making strategy; the challenge of designing consultations that fulfill the consultation objectives; and the importance of aligning strategy, leadership and organizational culture (p. 1).

As a framework for their paper, Patterson et al. (1992) set out a process which presented the decision phases of stimulus, analysis, decision, implementation, and impact. In their decision making process, decisions moved through the phases in the order identified above. In their model, strategic planning moved in reverse, from the vision to desired impact back through the phases to the stimulus. According to Patterson et al. to make good decisions, consultation in some form may be appropriate in any or every phase of the decision making process. However, the authors also noted that "each consultation must have a strategic purpose--a definable role in ensuring that the decision is sound, that implementation is successful, and that the desired impact is achieved" (p. 11).

Patterson et al. (1992) underscored the importance of establishing and communicating clear and appropriate objectives for each consultation, otherwise the consultation may fail to make the intended contribution to the decision making process. Based on their research, the authors identified these common mistakes made in establishing consultation objectives (p. 13):

- focusing on the wrong issues or an incomplete view of the issues
- assuming all parties share a common understanding of the purpose of the consultation and their role in it
- communicating the intent to "listen" but neglecting to engender genuine empathy for the people the process is meant to serve, and
- failing to balance the expectations of all parties with the realities that may

> affect participation, i.e., time, resources, policies, procedures, language, culture, and legal or political restraints.

Patterson et al. (1992) advised that managers or policy analysts must be extremely careful to do more than "intend to listen". The authors reiterated that the managers must ensure that they are truly open to hearing other views and must be clear about what will happen with the results of the consultation. Failure to think through how to engender genuine empathy can result in missed opportunities for innovation and increase cynicism among the participants.

> The objectives for consultation should include a commitment to stimulate interest among all parties in understanding one another's views and should provide opportunities for the participants to share their perspectives and, ideally, to discuss and reflect upon their different views and the implications for decision making. Once participants develop a sense of trust that they are being understood, the consultation process can more effectively focus on identifying a common vision. (p. 19)

According to Patterson et al. (1992), the choice of consultation objectives must be consistent and clearly aligned with and reflect the decision making strategy. Once the consultation objectives have been clarified, the challenge is one of designing the consultation initiatives to meet the objectives and selecting techniques to achieve the objectives. The authors offered the following examples (pp. 24-25):

> •If the objective is to *inform or educate* participants, information would have to come from the organization to the participants. This often involves a communications strategy and activities such as providing printed materials, making presentations, advertising, and other media initiatives.
>
> •If the objective is to *gather information or views* from participants, methods to encourage a flow of information from the participants to the organization would be employed. Depending on the scope of the consultation, methods might include polling, calls for briefs, 1-800 numbers, formal hearings, focus groups, and customer or public affairs services.
>
> •If the objectives include involving people in *making the decision or gaining their support* in implementation, consultation would be designed to promote dialogue between the organization and the participants and,

possibly, among the participants.

> •If the consultation objectives call for helping participants *make and/ or implement* the decision, consultation would be designed to place the organization in the role of facilitator, encouraging dialogue and resolution among the participants.

Patterson et al. (1992) pointed out that the "one-way" approaches involved people in the decision making process when the decision rested with the organization and when implementation of the decision did not necessarily depend on the active support of those affected. The "interactive" or cooperative approaches were appropriate when the decision would be made by the organization with the support of the participants, by the organization and participants together, or by the participants with the assistance of the organization. They indicated that interactive consultation is useful when "the issue does not have a clear cut or legal solution, is high profile or contentious, is not clearly within anyone's mandate, or involves transferring authority and accountability from one organization to another" (p. 24). The latter often requires a great deal of dialogue, listening, reflection and consensus-building. The authors advised that the choice of methods must also consider the combination of expectations, mandates and skills of the potential participants (p. 25).

Finally, Patterson et al. (1992) identified that the strategy for decision making must be supported by effective leadership and an appropriate organizational culture. They also offered examples in this area (p. 27):

> •If the decision making strategy calls for an approach that is predominantly "one-way", the leadership and culture of the organization must support effective communications and listening capabilities.
>
> •The more "interactive" the consultation strategy is, the more the organization must develop and support the capacity for partnerships with participants and the empowerment of others.
>
> •A decision making strategy that depends on effective consultation will require leadership committed to consultation and a culture that encourages consultative initiatives, develops consultative skills, and rewards excellence in consultative decision making.

Other authors (e.g., McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994) have also written about improving decisions through consultation. They have identified four levels of relationships between organization and community which were the basis for public involvement. These include: contracts and employment; service, goods and information; participation in the decision process; and shared authority and responsibility. They indicated that public consultation grew quickly during the 1980s. Further, the fourth level of relationship was rarely discussed in the 1980s but is now a growing reality and can be seen emerging in areas related to health care and education services (pp. 7-10).

McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) focused on consultation as a strategy for change. They viewed consultation as a dynamic process which was aimed at creating strategies for change and creating a climate to support continuous change. The goal, as they saw it, was not to achieve consensus but rather ownership of change. They reinforced that it may be necessary to work with a variety of stakeholders in a number of ways to promote that ownership (p. 54).

In their discussion of consultation, McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) identified that a frequent downfall of public consultation is that many efforts fail to define the decision and to anticipate how public input will be brought into the decision (p. 57). They developed a checklist of requirements necessary for the public consultation effort to be successful (p. 62):

- purpose and objectives that are well understood
- a well-described process and time line
- readable and comprehensible public information
- sufficient flexibility to allow changes in response to emerging situations or needs
- clearly defined roles, responsibilities and authority for members of the consultation team
- a commitment by senior managers to respect and support the process
- a clear explanation of how gathered information will be used
- simplicity and specificity

- trained employees with excellent communication skills and adequate time
- a commitment to communication and process management
- an intention by all representatives of the organization to be respectful and reliable at all times.

Many factors contribute to the effective organization of the consultation process. McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) underscored the necessity for the organization to dedicate people and resources to the public consultation effort. People must have the necessary skills to carry out their roles and effort must be invested in the design and management of the consultation process. They noted that trust was critical to the process and that mutual satisfaction with the consultation process can sometimes have more impact on the outcome than the content of the issues being discussed (pp. 61-62).

The Consultation Process

McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) presented a model for the consultation process which consisted of five stages: preparation, information exchange, identification of goals and criteria, evaluation of options, and choice and implementation. Overlapping each stage was a process of monitoring and ongoing communication (p. 63). As with other models reviewed earlier, these authors commented on the logic:

> No real consultation process is as discrete or as logical as the model described here. The stages of the consultation process often overlap. However, it is easier to identify the process requirements, and the need for modifications, if the process is designed in discrete, logical steps. (p. 63)

The discussion of public consultation presented by McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) is based on the assumption that there were communities of people who have a stake in decisions that affect them, and therefore, ought to be identified and consulted. These authors indicated that what defines “communities” is their relationship to the decision being made, that this process may, therefore, bring together groups that hold differing perspectives on the issue under discussion. The communities may be both internal and external to the organization. The identification of communities was seen to be a requirement for public consultation but these authors stressed that “communities are identified primarily to assist the design of the sampling techniques used to gain public input" (p. 65). No assumptions were made about the extent to which priorities were shared within that community.

McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) recommended using a combination of consultation methods during the process. Open consultation implies that the decision is open to whomever chose to become involved and provided input. This was seen as a necessary component of the concept of consultation. The authors pointed out that people self-select themselves into the process in non-random ways and that an open consultation process may not adequately represent the range of community opinion. The use of strictly random methods of sampling communities might provide a broad sense of community values without any detailed understanding of the people who feel most affected. The use of a combination of methods would address the following considerations:

> a) there are obvious open opportunities that potential participants may choose, b) there is an effort to invite community opinion leaders to participate, and c) there is a means to sample community opinion statistically. (p. 66)

McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) provided elaboration on each stage of the consultation process. They expanded on the importance of building a public consultation team and providing a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the team members. The roles most commonly required as part of the consultation team in their view included: a *coordinator* for the process, *facilitators* for meetings, *representatives* of the organization to provide information to the participants, *community liaisons* to provide convenient entry to the consultation process, *community relations support* to provide the variety of public information material that is produced, *equipment and facility support* to organize transportation, facilities and equipment, and *data manager* to develop and manage the collection, storage, retrieval, and perhaps analysis of the data (pp. 80-82).

These authors also addressed issues related to aligning the consultation process with hierarchy and decision processes within the organization. McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994) noted that public consultation often becomes a "thorny issue" for hierarchical management as management may not be prepared to deal with the changing information that emerges from the consultation. They reinforced that the point that public consultation was to expose decision makers to a wider range of information so that their decisions could be improved. A three-team structure which would integrate the consultation process within the organization was recommended: a team of decision leaders, a public consultation team, and a technical review team. Overlapping membership was not seen as problematic (pp. 83-85).

Understanding the Consultation Process

In a recent doctoral dissertation, Montgomerie (1994) examined the understanding of administrators in Alberta government regarding the role of public participation in the formulation of public policy. Montgomerie found that the administrators in his study perceived that the environment for making public policy had changed substantially within the previous decade and that this had resulted in greater public involvement in the policy process (p. 32). He also found that the public consultation process was utilized at all phases of the policy process.

> However, in most cases the consultation is an external loop in the policy process that is otherwise internal to the organization. The stage of the process at which the consultation is required sets certain requirements for the consultation and created questions which must be answered. The results of the consultation will be returned to the continuing policy process. (p. 36)

Montgomerie (1994) reported that the administrators in his study expressed some understanding of the stages of the policy process and as well as when consultation was required. The administrators undertook public consultation for the various purposes of issue identification, identifying policy alternatives, policy implementation, and evaluation. He noted, however, that while consultation was used at all stages of the policy process, that "typically, consultation was confined to that [one] stage alone after which the policy process continued" (p. 41). He concluded that the view held of the policy process by the administrators was consistent with the traditional stages model of policy making. Information received through the consultation was "transformed into policy-relevant knowledge for use by others in the organization in formulating and implementing policy. . . . As a result, the policy process becomes responsive to the internal demands of the organization rather than to the external environment within which it exists" (p. 52).

Montgomerie (1994) found that consultation was utilized most frequently to gather information on public preferences in order to validate or modify policy proposals generated within the organization. He found that consultation was also used for a second purpose to generate constructive relationships within the relevant community. Montgomerie emphasized that relationship building required continuing dialogue in which information is exchanged, common values are identified, and perspectives of all parties are modified to allow the pursuit of common goals. Consultation for relationship building, he concluded, "required a fundamental re-invention of the policy process and the culture of the administrative organization" (p. 53).

Montgomerie (1994) also explored the contribution of public consultation to the making of policy. He reported that the administrators showed two differing orientations in these matters. The first orientation reflected that the quality of the relationship between the organization and its public was dependent upon the policies resulting from the consultation. This orientation was focused on the "development of quality information which could be used in a linear policy process to produce identifiable policy outcomes" (p. 131). The second orientation was based on understanding that the quality of policy outcomes from the consultation was dependent upon the relationship of the organization with its public. These administrators viewed consultation as an act of relationship building, a process of meaningful exchange in which ongoing accommodation among participants resulted in policies that were acceptable to those affected (p. 132). The credibility and inclusiveness of the process were critical to these administrators.

The calls for broadened participation in the policy process have been heeded in many sectors as has been noted with the increasing public involvement through consultations related to policy processes. Montgomerie (1994) noted, however, that at the time of his study few administrators in the Alberta government had attended the public consultation training sessions and the relationship between consultation and the policy process was not yet well understood.

Organizational Learning

In the late 1970s, Argyris and Schon (1978) focused attention on the concept of organizational learning, that is, the process of detecting and correcting error, and outlined three levels of learning. The first level was single-loop learning which occurs when individuals and organizations recognize errors and make adjustments that are consistent with prevailing belief structures and strategies. Double-loop learning follows when individuals or organization leaders recognize errors and undertake an examination of the strategic orientation and the underlying norms and beliefs which then leads them to a new strategic posture. The third level of learning ensues when several adjustments have been made and the individuals and organizations reflect on the process of learning, that is, to learn about learning. Argyris and Schon referred to this latter level as deutero-learning.

Morgan (1986) described single-loop learning as the ability to detect and correct error in relation to a given set of operating norms. Double-loop learning, according to Morgan, depended on being able to take a "double look" at the situation by questioning the relevance of operating norms (p. 88). Morgan pointed out that strictly speaking, organizations do not think and act, organizational members do this. What we recognize as the organization is a product of the members' thoughts and actions. Recently, other writers have begun to examine organizations and learning. Some such as Sutton (1994) posited that all organizations are learning systems. He wrote that "learning embraces the capacity to respond to change; if organizations are not learning they are dying, or dead" (p. 80).

Can Governments Learn?

While there have been writings on organizational learning for several years, most findings have been based on research and observations from the private sector. Few studies have documented organizational learning in the public sector. Leeuw, Rist, and Sonnichsen (1994) have reviewed policy evaluations to provide a comparative look at organizational learning in public sector settings in Western countries. In summarizing their findings, Rist (1994b) indicated that organizational learning can be shown to exist in the public sector. He emphasized, however, that organizational learning happens among individuals.

> [Organizational learning] is linked to the biographies of the individuals within an organization, to the culture of the organization, to the styles of decision making, and to the means of communication (both formal and informal) within the organization. In sum, organizational learning takes place within the context of shared understandings, experiences, routines, values and acceptable behaviours. Organizational learning does not take place among complete strangers. . . . It comes about in those settings where there is a collective understanding of a situation, its presumed causes and its consequences, and the desire to change the present state or condition. (pp. 189-190)

Rist did offer several caveats concerning the work presented by Leeuw et. al. These included: acknowledging the limitations of both theory and research in the area of organizational learning; and the use of only one of many competing understandings of organizational learning.

Rist (1994b) examined how policy relevant information could contribute to organizational learning at each stage of the policy cycle. Rist (1994a, 1994b) presented the policy cycle as occurring in three phases--policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy accountability. According to Rist (1994b) each phase is distinct, has its own set of actors/ decision makers involved, and has its own demands for information. From the set of studies presented (Leeuw et al., 1994), Rist concluded that

> when *phase-specific* policy . . . material is developed and made available to the appropriate decision makers at the appropriate time, a key precondition for learning has taken place. Having *cycle-specific* information available within the system, accessible to those involved in the deliberations, targeted to the issues being discussed, and trusted by those involved is *not* sufficient to ensure that learning will occur or that use will follow. (1994b, p. 196, emphasis added)

Learning Through Consultation

Some Canadian academics (e.g., Atkinson & Coleman, 1989) have expressed the concern about whether members of policy networks can "see" broader challenges, rise about parochial interests, and develop the necessary organizational capacity inside and outside government to move the network to a new plane. Atkinson and Coleman concluded that many policy communities are mired in single-loop learning, unable to step out of patterned thinking and incapable of addressing challenges which call for new strategies. According to Lindquist (1991), "to ask if members of policy communities recognize or are well prepared to deal with new policy challenges is to inquire about their capacity for learning" (p. 18).

Lindquist (1991) explored two approaches to learning: learning through conflict and learning through cooperation. Debates concerning policy are frequently characterized by confrontation and conflict. Lindquist indicated that these debates can be viewed as "a potentially productive learning process which may lead to a better grasp of policy problems, even though the views of participants may not have changed dramatically when a round of the debate is completed" (p. 20). Members of a policy community may be motivated to learn due to perceived external threats to their interests. Sabatier (1988) argued that analytic debates will be most productive when challenges have been made to either secondary or near core aspects of belief structures. Sabatier indicated that, through this conflict, policy learning could occur. Sabatier referred to policy-oriented learning as

> relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioural intentions which result from experience and which are concerned with the attainment (or revision) of policy objectives. Policy-oriented learning involves internal feedback loops, perceptions concerning external dynamics, and increased knowledge of the state of the problem parameters and the factors affecting them. (p. 133)

Lindquist concluded that if public managers wanted to facilitate learning in policy communities that the managers should resist the inclination to dampen conflict and to reduce the struggles between groups. He cautioned that, while conflict could be construed as a prime motivator for learning, there are points beyond which conflict ceases to be productive. Public managers, he indicated, needed to determine where those limits lay and to steer the debate toward constructive topics.

Lindquist (1991) then outlined an alternative approach of learning through cooperation, that is, learning across groups and organizations. He emphasized that while cooperation is an easy path to recommend, it is not so easy to follow. Cooperation entails the development of new relationships and Lindquist noted that building trust is arduous. Lindquist suggested that

> Cooperation necessarily involves modifying or forging new "sector-wide" values, premises, and norms within policy communities so that problem-solving can move onto a new plane. . . . Encouraging cooperation within policy communities means finding ways for advocacy coalitions to begin a dialogue, exchange ideas, and perhaps come to agreements, to work in tandem rather than in open conflict with each other. For representatives of advocacy coalitions to entertain the possibility of cooperation is to consider embracing a new strategic orientation and implies acknowledging in some measure the validity of other perspectives or at least the necessity to do so. At base, this involves modifying their policy cores--a form of double-loop learning. (p. 23)

The literature presented here does support the notion that learning can and does occur within organizations, governments, and policy communities. The design of the consultation process can contribute to facilitating learning as policy makers and stakeholders participate in the policy process.

Reform in Higher Education

Within the past decade, higher education has been undergoing significant change throughout the world. A review of editions of the *Research into Higher Education Abstracts* from the early 1990s, the time period during which this study was being proposed, provided a lengthy list of policy issues related to the reform of higher education. The following listing of policy issue areas provides in part an inventory of those issues addressed in articles in the following editions of the *Research into Higher Education Abstracts* 1992, *25* (1); 1992, *25* (2); 1993, *26* (1); 1993, *26* (2); and 1993, *26* (3):

- quality of higher education

- access to higher education
- new financial models for funding higher education
- mergers of institutions
- demands for efficiency, strategic planning, deregulation and performance evaluation
- shifts in funding formulas from financing institutions to funding individual students
- new resource management strategies due to reduced appropriations for public higher education
- increases in tuition fees charged by colleges and universities
- centres of excellence, and
- increasing state intervention in higher education.

The commonalities of issues generated nationally and internationally reflected themes similar to those surfacing through policy discussions on future directions for adult learning in Alberta (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Summer; 1993, Fall).

Canadian Jurisdictions

During the early 1990s provincial governments in Canada directed attention to the review of policy issues related to post secondary education, labour market training, and adult lifelong learning. The processes for policy development undertaken by these governments varied but the outcomes resulted in documents which presented a policy framework for future directions. Some manner of consultation was incorporated into each of the processes. This section provides a brief overview of some of the policy development approaches undertaken in Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario during this time period.

Newfoundland and Labrador

In 1990 the Department of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador released for discussion a White Paper entitled *Equality, Excellence and Efficiency: A Postsecondary Educational Agenda for the Future* (Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Education, 1990). This White Paper was presented as an initial step was to be followed by a consultative period from February to April 1990, during which the Government wished to gather reactions to the policy framework and the specific initiatives outlined in the White Paper by inviting commentary from stakeholders and the general public. "Upon review of the submissions, if the specific initiatives require adjustment, the [implementation] schedule will be revised accordingly" (p. 25). A three-year implementation schedule was outlined in the paper.

British Columbia

In November 1992, the British Columbia Human Resource Development Project presented a report to the Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. The *Report of the Steering Committee* (British Columbia Human Resource Development Project, 1992) presented the results of their process to date.

> For almost two years, we have been participating in a quite uncommon process--a process to build agreement among very diverse groups who share a common interest in the future of education, training, and learning for adults in our province. We were invited to build together a new policy framework to give common direction to our future efforts on behalf of adult learners in our province. (Preface)

The Steering Committee comprised representatives of major constituencies in the province that had commitments to adult learning. The Committee members agreed to "seek consensus on a policy framework for adult learning, or human resource development, to give common direction to our separate efforts" (p.1). The process in British Columbia provided for extensive consultation during the development of that framework, and the report reflected the contributions of more than 3000 British Columbians over some 18 months.

New Brunswick

In January 1993, the New Brunswick Commission on Excellence in Education submitted to the Premier of New Brunswick their report *To Live and Learn: The Challenge of Education and Training* (Commission on Excellence in Education, Government of New Brunswick, 1993). The two-member Commission had been formed by the Premier in November 1991, and its purpose [in part] was to survey the educational and training system of New Brunswick and to recommend improvements. An earlier report of the Commission had provided a review with recommendations for the New Brunswick public school system (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1992). Public consultations, "both through meetings and the solicitation of briefs, were a prominent feature of the process" (p. 7). In Phase I, which focused on the public school system, more than 400 written submissions were made and approximately 100 meetings were held around the province. In Phase II, which focused on education and training, just more than 100 briefs were received and fewer meetings were requested. The Commissioners acknowledged that the range of advice was extensive and valuable, and that "there are few insights and suggestions in our report which do not have their origin in the analysis and ideas of those with whom we consulted" (p. 7). The report included the following statement in its Preface:

> In this report, as in our first, we have taken an incremental approach to educational change. While we are not uncritical of the system . . . we are appreciative of what has been accomplished. There is certainly scope for improvement in every sector of our tertiary educational system. . . . Our recommendations therefore are designed to enhance and reform rather than to demolish and reconstruct. Nevertheless, we believe that our recommendations represent a potential quantum improvement in the quality and relevance of education and training. (p. 7)

Manitoba

In the Province of Manitoba, the Premier established a four-member University Education Review Commission to review and make recommendations on university and post secondary education in the province. The Terms of Reference for the Commission indicated that the Commission, among other things, would "confer with the citizens of Manitoba, various associations and organizations and the university community as to their expectations of the role and mission of universities" (University Education Review Commission, 1993, p.149). The Commissioners, supported by a Commission Secretariat, toured all the post secondary institutions in the province as well as some others in Canada and the Western United States. In addition, the Commission held meetings in six centres throughout the province and received submissions from more than 200 presenters who spoke as students, Aboriginal spokespersons, community leaders, professional organization representatives, educationalists, university and community college representatives, and members of the general public. The Commissioners commented that the range of views was wide and, in general, focused on the advantages of constructive change. The report, *Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba: Doing Things Differently* (University Education Review Commission, 1993), presented several major recommendations and reflected the interpretations of what the Commissioners saw, heard and read.

Nova Scotia

In 1994, the Nova Scotia Department of Education distributed a document outlining its Strategic Plan, *Toward a Learning Culture: The Vision for Education and Training in Nova Scotia* (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1994). The strategic planning process which was adopted began with a review of relevant material pertaining to the education and training system including an analysis of the economic, demographic, social, educational and technological trends and their potential impact on education and training in Nova Scotia. Input was also received through an Education Roundtable consultation held in October 1993 which "provided important perspectives and insights conveyed by stakeholders representing a wide range of groups including parents, teachers, students, business, labour and special interest groups" (p. 18). Following the review process, a draft Strategic Plan was then completed. During a process of public consultation more than 300 written submissions were received and ten regional public meetings were held which involved approximately 800 people. Comments were also obtained through the use of a workbook distributed at the meetings and to others who requested the workbook. Information was gathered through these various consultation mechanisms to provide feedback on the draft and was considered in the finalization of the Strategic Plan (p. 18).

Ontario

In Ontario the Minister of Education and Training established a five-member Advisory Panel on the Future Directions for Postsecondary Education. The Advisory Panel submitted their report *Excellence, Accessibility, Responsibility* (Ministry of Education and Training, 1996), to the Minister in December 1996, with recommendations made after consultation with several hundred Ontarions "who brought diverse perspectives from within and from outside post secondary institutions" (p. 1). The Advisory Panel was appointed in mid-July 1996, with specific terms of reference to recommend the most appropriate sharing of costs, to identify ways to promote and support cooperation among the institutions, and to provide advice on meeting the expected demand for post secondary education (p. 3). Due to the five-month time frame that was given, the Panel adopted an accelerated approach to consultation and the development of advice. They drew heavily on expert knowledge and on the findings of many studies and reviews on post secondary education.

The Panel indicated that their consultation turned out to be extraordinarily interesting and helpful. During the consultation, the Panel members met with representatives of every university and college of applied arts and technology, "usually in a roundtable format that paired colleges and universities" (p. 3). They were interested in hearing from students, faculty, staff, governors and administrative officers. Special efforts were also made to meet separately with students. The Panel also met with provincial-level organizations, business and community groups, research and labour organizations, private vocational schools and institutes, and the general public. They also met with people outside the post secondary sector who could bring a broader perspective to the public policy issues. The Panel also received and read through 185 written briefs relating to the mandate of the group. In addressing its recommendations, the Panel noted that they believed that the basic structure of Ontario's post secondary sector was sound but there were clear signs that the sector was under pressure and that change was necessary to meet the needs of learners and society in the twenty-first century.

Other Jurisdictions

Scholars in other countries have also examined changes in higher education. Several doctoral dissertations have been produced in the policy domain by graduate students in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta. The focus on policy processes and influences in the 1960s had shifted to the analysis of policy issues in the 1980s (Miklos, 1992). A scrutiny of articles on educational policy and reform in United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia during the early 1990s also showed an emphasis by writers on the analysis of policy issues and the impacts of policy implementation. Fewer writers offered comment on the process of policy development in these various settings.

Ideas which influenced public policy emerge from many sources. In a recent monograph produced by the League for Innovation in the Community College, O'Banion (1997) pointed out that during the 1980s the elementary and secondary schools in the United States "struggled with one of the most massive reform movements in the history of education" (p. 7). In 1993, a report on American higher education, *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education* (as cited in O'Banion), which was published as an open letter, "triggered a wave of reform in higher education similar to that of the public schools in the 1980s" (p. 7). This report emphasized two recommendations: place learning first and change the traditional architecture of education. The report captured the attention of a large number of faculty members and administrators, legislators, and higher education organizations. The views on this reform initiative have been described in turn to reflect "a revolution in learning, a paradigm shift, a societal transformation" (p. 8).

Ideas and reform initiatives from various sources have influenced policy discussions across our nations. The process of policy development is important and ongoing and is deserving of the attention of researchers to effect further improvements in the process.

Summary of the Review

Literature in the field of policy studies was reviewed to provide a foundation for understanding for this study. Following a general orientation to the literature, the study was design and initiated. A further review of the literature was undertaken following an analysis of the data.

The field of policy sciences developed in the 1950s with a strong rational and technical focus and with an orientation to a positivist logic of inquiry which dominated the field for thirty years. The stages models of the policy process dominated the approach to policy inquiry for many years. By the late 1980s the stages models were viewed as sequential, differentiated functionally, cumulative and bounded. Many scholars thought that these models had outlived their usefulness. Others pointed out that while there were limitations, that the models provided a useful reference and that the policy problems do, in fact, go through several stages.

The challenge to the rational approach to the policy sciences had begun to gain attention by the mid-1980s. The critiques questioned the adequacy of the rational approach to address the increasing complexity of policy problems confronting policy analysts, the appropriateness of the value-neutral stance, and the failure to account for the political dimensions of the policy process. Growing discontent with the positivist bias for policy inquiry provided the opportunity for alternative approaches to policy formulation to evolve.

Kingdon (1984) introduced a view of the policy process that provided a significant departure from the stages model. His approach depicted streams of problems, policy proposals and political activities flowing through organizations. The greatest policy change occurred when a choice opportunity occurred. This model provided explanations of the political dimension as well as the involvement of members of a broader policy community.

Research on the policy community focused on the interactions of policy actors and networks. Mitroff identified stakeholders among the forces which affect organizations. He provided a definition of organizational stakeholders which focused on those who both affected and were affected by the decisions and activities of the organization, both internally and externally. Other writers called for increasing involvement in the policy process and participation now extended from the policy community to include other relevant stakeholders.

As the approaches to policy inquiry shifted from the positivist to post-positivist orientations, the involvement of more participants also occurred. Critical planning theory, phenomenology and interpretive inquiry all influenced the changes in policy inquiry and the involvement of relevant stakeholders and participants.

Some scholars promoted the inclusion of public deliberation as a significant aspect of the policy process and saw this as an important part of the job of the public administration manager. While there were several functions that could be served by incorporating participation in the policy process, there continued to be aspects of the process that were of concern to administrators and elected officials.

Consultation has become an increasingly visible activity in the 1990s as part of decision making and policy discussions. Research on consultation has emphasized the importance of clarifying the consultation objectives, aligning these objectives with the overall decision making strategy, designing the consultation by choosing techniques to meet these objectives, and ensuring that the leadership and organizational culture support consultation. Consultation is seen as a dynamic process and one that can serve as a strategy for change. Public consultation can be used at various and multiple points throughout the policy process.

In the late 1970s Argyris and Schon (1978) focused attention on the concept of organizational learning with its levels of single-loop learning and double loop-learning. Most of the findings related to organizational learning have come from the private sector.

Some comparative research has now shown that organizational learning can be shown to also exist within the public sector. Rist (1994b) identified a key precondition for organizational learning to occur in the policy cycle. Other researchers have examined learning within policy networks. Linquist (1991) discussed two approaches to learning within the policy process: learning through conflict and learning through cooperation. The consultation process could facilitate learning in the policy process.

Several policy review processes undertaken by the provincial governments in Canada during the 1990s were reviewed. The approaches adopted took several forms. One government distributed a White Paper for discussion; others established a review body with structures which varied from a two to four-person review commission to an advisory panel to a large multi-organization steering committee. Each of the descriptions of these policy reviews indicated that the approaches sought public input through some form of consultation. These consultations included written briefs and submissions, meetings, and often roundtable discussions. The time frames encompassed five to eighteen months. The longer times included more consultation. All reports that referred to completed consultation activities indicated that the advice received was valuable, diverse, and extensive. The resulting policy documents from these provincial policy reviews typically included policy recommendations, sometimes as a policy framework, and all outlined policy change. The descriptions of these government policy reviews and this literature review established the context for this research study.

Research Questions

This review of the literature indicated that the "stages" model had presented an ideal perspective of the policy process. Criticism of the stages models had grown throughout the 1980s. Sabatier (1992) did acknowledge that the stages approach had been helpful in dividing the complex policy process into more manageable units of analysis. Doern and Phidd (1992) noted that, while most decisions and policies are not made following a rational model, the model remained important since it provided a general standard. They also indicated that, to a certain extent, a policy problem does go through several stages. The research conducted by Montgomerie (1994) in the early 1990s indicated that many of the government administrators who participated in his study still held traditional views of the policy process.

Sabatier (1992) emphasized that much progress, however, has been made in describing and analyzing the policy process through alternative approaches to policy research that has been "methodologically sophisticated and guided by explicit theory" (p. 31). He listed Kingdon's (1984) "policy streams" framework among those research efforts that have made a contribution to developing a better theory than the stages models and to advancing our knowledge of the policy process.

Kingdon (1984) presented an alternative view of policy making with his conceptualization of three largely unrelated "streams" of policy problems, policy proposals, and politics flowing through an organization. He proposed that the greatest policy change resulted from the creation of a "window of opportunity" when the three streams join. Kingdon's research offered a methodological approach as well as a framework for the analysis of the data in this Alberta study.

The rational model provided few insights into how policy information is transformed during the policy process. Policy analysis involves producing and transforming policy-relevant information. Dunn (1981) described several policy-analytic methods which supported his policy analysis framework. Stone (1988) indicated, however, that the essence of policy making in political communities is the struggle with ideas. Writers such as Majone (1989) proposed that policy analysis should be less about problem solving and more about argumentation. He advised that transformation of information is a combination of analysis and argument.

These findings from the literature contributed the basis for the research questions for this study: How was policy development structured for the process to develop the policy framework for the 1994 White Paper? What perceptions did the policy planners hold of the policy process? How was policy information transformed in the process under study? What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?

During the late-1980s changes had begun to be incorporated into the approaches to policy inquiry. There was a noted increase in the involvement of policy communities and relevant stakeholders in the policy development. Various forms of public involvement and consultation were introduced to the policy process. Montgomerie (1994) noted in his research that, from the administrators' perspectives, the environment for policy development had changed substantially in the previous decade and had resulted in greater public involvement in the policy process. Researchers such as Patterson, Lohin, and Ferguson (1992) gathered information from public and private sector managers on how consultation could enhance decision making and presented four important considerations for the design of consultations. While the literature on consultation often addressed the methods and techniques of the consultation process, less is written about the relationship between the consultation process and the policy decision process.

The following questions arise for this research study: How was consultation structured for this process? What were the emerging issues with the consultation process in this case study? In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?

This review of the literature, then, informed the development of the specific research questions for this study:

1. *How was policy development structured for this process?*
2. *How was public consultation structured for this process?*
3. *What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?*
4. *In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?*
5. *What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?*

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the design and the methodology for this research study. The literature on various aspects of qualitative research has been integrated throughout the chapter. The discussion on design begins by establishing this study within an interpretive paradigm of qualitative research and describes the design of the research strategy for this qualitative case study.

The Research Methodology presents the details of preparing for and conducting this study. The discussion of organizing for the study recounts the process of gaining "access" to the government department and outlines the detail preparation for the collection of data. The section on Data Collection discusses the various sources of data for this study and the techniques used to gather the data. As the volume of data in qualitative studies often presents a challenge to researchers, those strategies which were developed to organize and manage the data are presented. A summary of the approach to data analysis is provided.

The trustworthiness of the outcome(s) of a qualitative research study is generated through its research design and methodology. The constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are generally accepted as describing rigour in qualitative inquiry. These constructs are discussed as they relate to the design of this study. This chapter concludes with a reflection on some of the ethical considerations for this study.

Research Design

The term qualitative research is a broad one and holds many different meanings. A generic definition has been offered, however, by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) in which they describe qualitative research as

> multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 2)

Within the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research, the researcher strives to understand and interpret meaning by studying how individuals in a social setting construct the world around them, that is, how they view their own sense of reality. Part of this view assumes that reality is socially constructed and is maintained by the meanings and actions of individuals. Different individuals construct different realities and the researcher recognizes that, for any situation, there may be multiple realities. Knowledge, within this research perspective, includes those insights or understandings which the researcher has developed and is based in how individuals make sense of their own experience. The research design for this study is consistent with an interpretive orientation and assumptions and incorporates the methods of qualitative inquiry.

The overall research strategy chosen for this study is a qualitative case study research design. This strategy sets a specific case, that of the development of the White Paper by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, within a larger phenomenon, that of the evolution of approaches to the development of public policy. This research study examined events spanning July 1992, to October 1994. Multiple sources of data have been accessed in undertaking the research for the study. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews, observations, document analysis and the recording of field notes.

Case Study Research

The case study research method is an accepted research design (Merriam, 1988). Yin (1989) wrote of the increasing use of the case study as a research tool by those doing social and psychological investigations, evaluation research, public policy studies, and business, management and international studies. He stated that "a significant trend may be toward appreciating the complexity of organizational phenomena, for which the case study may be the most appropriate research method" (p. 12). He continued on to offer this definition of the case study strategy:

> A case study is an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple

sources of evidence are used. (p. 23)

Yin (pp. 17-20) presented the following points to consider when deciding upon a research design:

- What is the form of the research question?
- To what extent does the research require control over behaviour? and
- Is the phenomenon under study contemporary or historical?

Yin offered that questions of "how" and "why" are appropriate for case study, history and experimental designs. He stated that the case study, however, is a preferred method in examining contemporary events when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated.

Merriam (1988) has reviewed the work of several authors who have written about case study research. She described a case study as a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event. Merriam identified these four characteristics as essential properties of a qualitative case study: particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive (p.11). She further elaborated on these characteristics which emphasize that the case study will focus on a particular situation, event, process or phenomenon, that the end product of the case study will provide a rich and "thick" description of the phenomenon under study, that the case will contribute to the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study, and that the qualitative case study will rely on inductive reasoning, that is, theories emerge from an examination of the data, a discovery of concepts and understanding rather than from the verification of predetermined hypotheses which characterizes most quantitative case studies.

This Case Study

The purpose of this research study was to develop an increased understanding of the policy development process followed by the Government of Alberta's department of Advanced Education and Career Development (hereafter often referred to as the Department) in developing the policy framework for the 1994 White Paper. The focus of the study was the process leading to the 1994 White Paper.

Design of the Study

The term "design" tends to imply a very specific plan of action. However, for the qualitative researcher, design is merely a plan of how to approach or undertake the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in writing of qualitative research and naturalistic inquiry indicate that "design . . . means planning for certain broad contingencies without, however, indicating exactly what will be done in relation to each" (p. 226). A qualitative design, therefore, will remain sufficiently flexible and open and emergent even after the data collection begins. Design decisions are made throughout the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 59) and within the context of the study. The design for this qualitative study did remain flexible and emergent throughout.

The study incorporated three major streams of activity which while sequenced were also often concurrent activities for much of the study. The first stream was a review of the literature which initially focused on the domains of policy studies and qualitative inquiry. The literature review continued throughout the study as relevant topics were explored. The review was most intensive during the proposal development and the data analysis and interpretation phases of the study.

The second stream of activity focused on data collection. The data were collected through qualitative inquiry methods of interviewing, observing, analyzing documents and records, and through recording field notes. The data collection began later than the literature review and was most intensive around specific events in the process which took place in September - October 1993, in April - May 1994, and during the gathering of the interview and document data which was primarily from October 1994, to January 1995.

The third stream of activity was data analysis which was overlapping and integrated throughout the data collection but was more intensive from October 1994, to June 1995, and later during the completion of the dissertation which extended through 1996 and to the latter half of 1997.

Research Methodology

Organizing for the Study

Gaining Access

To undertake the data gathering for this study, as the researcher, I needed to obtain "access" to or gain the cooperation of the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development. I required access to Departmental staff members and certain other information contained in documents and records. I also needed permission to observe those consultation sessions for which participation was by invitation.

I quickly came to realize that access is not an event but rather is a process. Total access, according to Glesne and Peshkin (1992):

> refers to your acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes. (p. 33)

For studies which involve an organization, it is necessary to communicate with the "gatekeepers", that is, those individuals who must provide the consent for you as the researcher to enter the setting and with whom you must negotiate the conditions of access (p. 32).

I initiated the process of gaining access for this study through a series of informal conversations with my colleagues and with Departmental staff members who could advise me on ways to approach a request for access to the Department. My telephone call to the office of the Deputy Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in early September 1993, was referred to the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister for Policy and Information Services. This Assistant Deputy Minister held responsibility for planning the public consultation sessions for the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project. After discussing my research interests with the Assistant Deputy Minister, I prepared a letter outlining the intent of my study and my request for cooperation from the Department. The Assistant Deputy Minister took my request forward to the Deputy Minister. While the Deputy Minister was supportive of the concept of the study, she expressed concerns about undertaking the study at that time due to the limited availability of staff with heavy workloads, the confidential and sensitive nature of issues under review and discussion, and the very political nature of the process which was underway. In a personal conversation with me in early October 1993, the Deputy Minister suggested that the timing for the research study would be better beginning in Spring, 1994, after much of the work on the process would be concluded.

Over the next few months, I continued to maintain contact with the Assistant Deputy Minister and other Department staff members to demonstrate my commitment to conducting the study and to receive updates on the process. Glesne and Peshkin referred to this as "logging time" (p.34) when one is involved in the process of gaining access but is just being around, participating in activities and talking informally with people. The discussions during this time period helped develop my understanding of the issues, the context, and the roles of the Department staff members who were involved in the policy and consultation planning activities. This understanding was integrated into the evolving research design for this study.

In late March 1994, just as the Draft White Paper was ready for release, I again put forward a request for cooperation from the Department to allow access to facilitate my study. I telephoned the Deputy Minister directly with my request. The conversation provided the opportunity to answer questions regarding the proposed study. Verbal support was given to proceed with the research study along with an indication of cooperation for access to staff members and support materials. I prepared a letter outlining my request and an overview of the proposal. I forwarded these and an abbreviated copy of my curriculum vitae to the Deputy Minister. I received written confirmation of Departmental cooperation along with an invitation to attend the Round Two Consultation sessions in both Edmonton and Calgary in May 1994, as an observer of the process. The Deputy Minister circulated information on my study to senior staff in the Department indicating that I would be contacting some Department staff members for information and assistance with the study.

In writing about gaining access, Bodgan and Biklen (1992) reiterated that the process of negotiating entry for a study can be a long and labourious process often entailing formal procedures. They advise the researcher negotiating access to be persistent, flexible and creative (p. 85). Gorden (1980) advised that if access is refused, to still persist.

To facilitate the study and to minimize the impact on the Department, I had requested that a senior staff member be named as my contact for the study. I wanted to have an individual whom I could keep informed about the study and its progress and who would, therefore, be in a position to respond to any queries about the study which might come from within the Department. A contact person could also advise me on protocol within the Department and direct me to "policy process participants" and other information relevant to the study. A senior Department staff member was named as my contact.

Contact and access was maintained with several Department staff members throughout the study. This was accomplished throughout the data collection phase of the study through informal meetings and discussions, the occasional written update, telephone contact, and through the gathering of feedback following the review of draft materials.

Preparing for Data Collection

Introducing the Study

Before requesting access to the Department and the later cooperation of respondents in the study, I developed an outline of the relevant information about this research study in order to provide an explanation to individuals in the Department and the community. This is a planning technique described by Glesne and Peshkin (1992, pp. 31-33) which provides both written and verbal presentations for the researcher. For different situations, I required introductions of the study which had varying levels of detail; I provided the same basic points to everyone but the details expanded and contracted to fit the circumstances. The outline of research information told what I and my study were about but also helped to prepare others to take part during the data collection.

The following twelve points were presented by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) to guide the development of such a research story. They suggest outlining the following information:

> - who you are
> - what you are doing
> - why you are doing it
> - what you will do with the results
> - how the study site and participants were selected
> - any possible benefits as well as risks to the participant
> - the promise of confidentiality and anonymity to participants and site
> - how often you would like to observe or hope to meet for interviews
> - how long you expect that day's session to last
> - requests to record observations and words
> - clarification that you are present not to judge or evaluate, but to understand, and
> - clarification that there are no right or wrong answers to your questions, that they are the experts. (p. 32)

Other authors described similar techniques for researchers to use in preparing for a study. Bogdan and Biklen wrote that "in explaining yourself at the start of a study and during its course, subjects will have questions, many of which will recur" (1992, p. 83). They, too, provided a list of questions which is very similar to the questions posed by Glesne and Peshkin and they also offered suggestions on how to respond.

Dexter (1970) suggested that, if given a complex explanation of a study, many potential interviewees may feel that the matter should probably be handled by some specialists or that they do not know anything about it or that it might prove embarrassing. He, too, advised the researcher to develop an outline for the research and introduce the project in general terms emphasizing that as the researcher you want to get the respondent's perspective.

My prepared outline of information for the research proved very useful when making contact with the Department and with individuals to request their participation in the study. I prepared written comments for each of the points listed. Preparing the outline assisted me in selecting appropriate vocabulary and phrases to describe this research study and to develop a concise request for the interview and the interviewee's time.

The prepared information in the outline proved valuable as questions related to the study, the research methods and the outcomes were asked of me in different places and in different ways throughout the study. It was useful to me to have had this initial preparation concerning this study particularly when I was discussing the study with individuals who had limited familiarity with research studies of this kind.

Requesting an Interview

I made each of the requests for an interview by telephone. No interview request was refused. Each telephone discussion was followed by a letter stating the purpose of the study, confirming the time and place of the interview, and including a copy of the consent form. Two versions of the confirmation letter were prepared, one for staff within the Department and one for respondents external to government. I sent one "generic" copy of the Department letter to my Department contact person as this individual was identified in the letter as the Department contact if staff members required further information on the study from the Department perspective.

When possible, the confirmation letter was hand delivered to ensure that I was familiar with the location, the office setting for the interview, and any other arrangements such as parking. Being familiar with such logistics was helpful in timing my arrival for the interview. In circumstances where an alternative interview location other than the respondent's office/ work setting was being used, the letter was sent by mail or fax. In one instance and following discussions about logistics, the letter was hand delivered at the time of the interview.

The Consent Form

The consent form developed for this study had two fold purposes: to serve as the instrument recording the written consent of the respondent to participate as an interviewee in the study, and to outline the conditions for that participation and the responsibilities of the researcher in honouring confidentiality. The form also outlined the purpose of the study and described the primary methods by which data for the study were gathered through interviewing key individuals, observing selected meetings and forums, and collecting documents and relevant written materials.

This consent form provided a basis for discussing the ethics requirements for research studies connected with the University of Alberta and the Department of [at that time] Educational Administration. The discussion on ethics was always included in introductory discussions with the interviewee. The topic was revisited in any return interviews.

The signed form provided agreement that the respondent would participate in one or more interviews which would be based on the interviewee's experience and observations related to this public policy development process. It was noted that participation in the interviews was voluntary and the interview and any audio recording could be stopped at any time. The respondent could also reconsider this commitment, change it or withdraw from the study at any time. As researcher, I agreed to honour the confidentiality of the interview and to exercise sensitivity in reporting any potentially identifying comments.

I took two copies of the consent form with me to each interview. Providing two copies at the time of the interview often assisted the interviewee who might not have at hand the original copy which was supplied with the confirmation letter. Following a discussion of the ethical review of the study, two copies of the consent form were signed by all respondents interviewed. One signed copy was left with the interviewee and the other was taken away for my research project files.

The Interview Guide

Once an individual had agreed to the interview, I undertook specific preparation for that interview. This included reviewing and noting the information which I knew about the individual and his or her role and possible involvement in the process under study. A general interview guide was developed to outline the issues/questions to be addressed during the interviews. The interview guide was reviewed for each interview to help focus the questions for this particular interview based upon the data collected to date and upon the review of the previous transcripts and interview tapes.

The five specific research questions for this study provided the framework for the interviews. Each interview began with asking the interviewee to talk about his or her involvement and role in the process leading to the development of the White Paper. The interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, but as the interviewer, I asked further questions to probe for information and understanding. The interviews provided data on: how the policy development process was structured; how the public consultation process was structured; what were the emerging issues with the consultation process; how the consultation process affected the policy process; and what were the emerging characteristics for the policy development process.

The Interview Plan

A general interview plan was developed and each interview was designed around the following blocks:

- *pre-interview*: arrival, observations, and introductory discussions and small talk
- *study protocol*: review main purpose of study and interview, discuss ethics considerations, stress confidentiality, answer any questions, complete the informed consent form, and confirm permission for audio taping the interview
- *set up*: physical arrangements for interview and note taking, set up of equipment, site test of equipment
- *the interview*: begin taping, consult the guide of topics or issues, conduct the interview or discussion, and note specific points that are relevant
- *conclusion*: summary questions and interviewee reflections, conclude taping
- *post-interview*: small talk, observations, pack up equipment, arrange any required follow-up
- *debriefing*: researcher reflection and debriefing, and writing of field notes.

Dexter (1970) wrote of the value of preparing and continually revising an interview plan. He emphasized that interviewing cannot be considered independently of the problem and the situation and that interviewing is a matter of strategy and tactics (p. 102).

My interview plan served as a planning technique and provided me with a general pattern for each interview to ensure that the procedural aspects of interviewing were considered each time. This sequence of the interview plan seemed to contribute to establishing a rapport with the interviewee.

The information included on the interview plan may seem to some readers to be basic and straight forward. However, I have over the past few years been the interviewee with graduate students who are gathering data for their research studies. My own personal interviewee experiences suggest that the details of planning for and conducting the interview are not always attended to. This is particularly so in the later stages of a research study when the researcher may overlook discussing the ethical considerations of the study due to having conducted several interviews for the study. For my own research case study, I recognized that the context for this study and the positions held by the interviewees underscored the importance of presenting myself in a professional and well-prepared manner for each interview. The impression and the tone set at the beginning of an interview quickly contribute to the rapport established between the interviewer and interviewee.

The Equipment

Early in planning this study, I decided to audiotape all scheduled semi-structured interviews. A Sony M-717V cassette recorder was purchased for the study. This is a compact, hand-sized recorder. All interviews and several of the field notes were recorded on Sony MC60 or Maxell MC60UR microcassette tapes. A complete set of cassette tapes was maintained for the study; that is, each interview was recorded onto its own cassette and retained. The quality of the recordings was enhanced by the use of a battery operated external Sony ECM-R100 condenser microphone. The microphone was a multidirectional table top model. The recorder was powered through an electric outlet whenever possible but alternately by rechargeable batteries when necessary. All interview tapes were transcribed using an Olympus Pearlcorder T1000 microcassette transcriber also purchased for the study. The transcriber had a foot control and headphones for ease of handling the tape during playback. The machine could also be adjusted for tone and to slow the playback speed which assisted greatly in improving the clarity of audio feedback for transcription purposes and for ensuring that I was able to capture all spoken details from the interviews.

A routine for interview preparation was developed and followed prior to each interview. The procedure included reviewing a checklist for required equipment and materials for each interview, assembling the required equipment, testing the operation of each piece of required equipment, and preparing and numbering the labels for the audiotapes to be used for the interview. Following each interview, the equipment was cleaned, as necessary, and returned to its storage area. Batteries were tested and returned for recharging as required. Interview tapes were catalogued and stored.

Data Management Scheme

A general format was devised to assist with the documenting, organizing and managing of various research and field notes and data which would accumulate throughout the duration of the study.

My notes were recorded into one of four categories: interview notes (IN), field notes (FN), observer notes (ON) or document notes (DN). Each record or set of notes was assigned one of the four alpha categories (IN, FN, ON, or DN). The interviews were also assigned a numeric code. The notes were then given an additional code to record the date of the activity (month, day, year). For example, my fifth interview was held on October 19, 1994, and was identified in my records as IN05-10-19-1994.

The interview notes were titled or labelled for each interview in some manner, and listed the date, time and setting of the interview, as well as the numeric code of the audio tape for the interview. The field notes also recorded the individual(s) present at the interview.

Field notes are generally considered to be "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 107). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) defined field notes as consisting of two kinds of materials: descriptive and reflective. In addition to descriptive notes, my field notes included ideas, strategies, questions and reflections which emerged from the data and the research experience.

The observation guide developed for this study listed the activity or event, location and the date of the observation. Specific observations noted included a sketch of the physical environment and layout, the social environment and interactions, the nature of activities, roles and organization, and other process observations.

The document notes recorded the title of the document, any bibliographic information, date of the document, and an indication of whether or not a copy of the document had been obtained. For those records to which I had access within the Department, I wrote down the title of the record or created a descriptive name for it, the date of the record, and then made note of any relevant information. My field notes frequently included questions for follow-up or reflections on how the document or record contributed to the study.

My own insights, reflections and questions were often recorded throughout my notes as they occurred during the observations, reviewing documents, and so on. These reflections were recognized in the note categories and were isolated and marked within square brackets.

A template or cover page was created for each of the four categories of notes. The notes were recorded in handwritten form or occasionally were tape recorded. These were not later transcribed nor converted to computer files.

Data Collection

While the case study is a specific research design, it has no particular prescribed data collection methods. Almost all research methods may be used within a case study design. In designing this study, as a researcher I selected methods for qualitative inquiry which would fit appropriately with the context of this case study.

Data Sources

Three broad data sources were identified for the study. The potential data sources included:

- *individuals*: participants within government involved in the process of the development of the White Paper; stakeholders and participants external to AAECD who participated in some aspect of the process; senior government executives and political policy makers; and participants external to AAECD who were involved in planning and implementing the consultation process,
- *events*: regional consultations, roundtable / consultation discussions, and meetings, and
- *documents and records*: government documents and records, as well as other relevant reports and discussion papers.

Once access to the Department had been approved, this facilitated the process of identifying specific individuals as potential respondents and specific documents and records which could inform the case.

Individuals

Individuals were identified as possible respondents by using two methods: identifying those in key positions and using "purposeful" sampling (Patton, 1990). Through discussions with Department staff members and through a review of documents and records, names of several key individuals were identified. This list was supplemented through purposeful sampling strategies.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling, according to Patton (1990), lie in selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the research study (p. 169). Within this sampling approach, I selected three of the strategies which Patton (pp. 172-179) outlined and I used these to identify potential respondents. The three strategies were:

- snowball or chain sampling
- maximum variation sampling, and
- opportunistic sampling.

The snowball sampling strategy was used to identify key participants for the study.

The strategy involves asking well-situated individuals to identify other people who are knowledgable, in this case, about this policy development process. As I made contacts for this study, I asked for such a list of names of key individuals. The chain of recommended individuals tended to diverge initially and then converge as a few names were frequently identified. The names of all Departmental respondents in the study surfaced through this snowballing technique. The non-departmental individuals were identified based on their participation in some or all of Round One and Two Consultations, the July Fiscal Planning Workshop, and the Budget Roundtable. The AAECD staff members, political policy makers and other participants who were identified were all involved in some aspect of planning and implementing public consultations, strategic planning, and/ or in drafting parts of the White Paper.

Maximum variation sampling offers a strategy for purposeful sampling that attempts to capture the central themes that cut across participant variation. I identified some of the diverse characteristics of the policy participants and stakeholders and gathered data from sources that reflected that diversity. The diversity of respondent roles is displayed later in Tables 1 - 3. This strategy was particularly useful in identifying members of stakeholder groups and participants external to the Department. Patton (1990) stated that the data collection and analysis from a small sample of great diversity will yield two kinds of findings: "high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity" (p. 172).

The third strategy which I selected was that of opportunistic sampling. Fieldwork can require making decisions based on new opportunities which occur during actual data collection. "Being open to following wherever the data lead is a primary strength of qualitative strategies in research. This permits the sample to emerge during fieldwork" (Patton, 1990, p. 179). As documents were reviewed, the roles and participation of key individuals in the process under study became more clearly understood. Thus, potential respondents were identified and invited to participate in the study while the study was in progress.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) discussed the benefits of developing a close working relationship with a member of the researched group who is well informed about the case under study. This informed individual can help to then inform the researcher and may play various roles such as "making introductions, alerting the researcher to unexplored data sources, and helping to develop theories grounded in the data" (p. 51). An individual in this role can provide information which may be relevant to strategy problems in a study (Gorden, 1980) such as gaining access for the study or determining the appropriate time and place for interviews. Such an individual can also offer the insight of an insider and contribute to developing an understanding of the organization and its processes.

More than one such individual emerged during this study. This offered me with some balance as well as an increased insight into perspectives offered through the data. This also supplemented the more formalized role of my Department contact person for this study.

In discussing interviewing, Gorden (1980) identified several types of respondents; one is the "insider-outsider" (p. 149). The insider-outsider includes individuals who are ex-members of the organization who can be respondents for the study. In developing an overall understanding for the context of this study, more than one insider-outsider individual was identified and provided insight through the discussion of my study.

Events

Events and activities which are part of the process under study served as an important source of information. A number of events were organized by the Department as part of the public consultation in planning for the White Paper. For this study, some of those events and activities provided me, in my role of an observer, with the opportunity for data collection. Patton described the importance of personal experience with a program and states that "there was simply no substitute for direct experience through participant observation" (1990, p. 202).

The events and activities which I observed included: four of the Round One consultation sessions in September and October 1993; the Round Two consultation sessions in both Edmonton and Calgary in May 1994, each of which was two days in length; and one consultation debriefing meeting in May 1994. I also attended a panel presentation in April 1994, at which Department staff members participated with community and institutional representatives in the discussion of the Draft White Paper and its implications.

Documents

Lincoln and Guba (1985) distinguished between documents and records. They defined documents as "any written or recorded material, other than a record, that was not prepared specifically in response to a request from the inquirer" (p. 277) and records to include "any written or recorded statement prepared by or for an individual or organization for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an accounting" (p. 277).

From May 1993, to October 1994, AAECD prepared a number of public documents as part of the policy development and consultation process. These were widely distributed to the public. Several of these documents represent the "products" of the process and were often referred to during the interviews conducted for this study. A general familiarity with these documents was necessary to gain an understanding of the context, the policy issues and the process.

The range of documents distributed to the public during the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project included background reports, consultation overview documents, and newsletters. Department records reviewed included items such as news releases, meeting agendas, meeting minutes / notes, reports, form letters, and planning documents. A review of such documents and records can provide data such as excerpts, quotations, dates and time lines, background information, lists of participants, identification of issues, and decisions about the policy development process. Reading through these documents provided not only a basic source of information but also contributed to the development of important questions to pursue for the study.

Data Collection Techniques

Interviewing

Interviewing was used in this study to gather information and to develop an understanding of the multiple perspectives held of the process. Morgan (1988) described an interview as a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one in order to get information from the other. The types of interviews which I conducted varied and included semi-structured interviews for scheduled interviews as well as open-ended conversations for natural or informal interviews. For both types of interview, the questions asked were intended to fit the topic so that the answers would contribute toward understanding more about the process under study. The questions were based in the reality and experience of the respondent.

Semi-structured interviews. Conducting semi-structured interviews provided me with the opportunity to develop an understanding of the process and to explore similar issues across the interviews with the respondents. I did not develop a list of specific questions to be followed in exact sequence but rather prepared an interview guide of areas or issues which I wanted to explore through the interviews. As pointed out by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 97), even when an interview guide is used for semi-structured interviews, there is still considerable latitude for the interviewer to pursue a range of topics and for the respondents to shape the content of the interviews.

Informal interviews. A more open-ended conversation for natural or informal interviews offered the opportunity to understand a range of perspectives held by the policy process participants. Several open-ended informal interviews occurred during the course of observations, on-site record reviews, or through discussions and conversations with stakeholders. These were not audio taped but relevant information was included in my field notes. These informal conversations contributed greatly to developing my understanding of the context for the processes and added to the richness of the data gathered.

Elite interviews. There are several references in the literature to specialized or elite interviewing. Dexter (1970) referred to studies in political science, sociology, as well as educational administration and educational sociology which have relied on “elite interviewing”. In discussing elites, Dexter indicated that while he is not happy with the term “elite”, he has not found another term to illustrate his point. He referenced an earlier article by Reisman (cited in Dexter, 1970, p. 5) in which Reisman indicated that “people in important or exposed positions may require VIP interviewing treatment on the topics which relate to their importance or exposure”. However, Dexter continued to say that an elite interview:

> is an interview with *any* [emphasis in original] interviewee--and stress should be placed on the word "any"-- who in terms of the current purposes of the interviewer is given special, nonstandardized treatment. By special, nonstandardized treatment I mean
>
> 1. stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation,
> 2. encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation,
> 3. letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent . . . his notions of what he regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notions of relevance. (Dexter, 1970, p. 5)

Dexter clearly recognized the importance of bringing together what we would now refer to as the interpretivist perspective with qualitative interviewing techniques in working with respondents who are influential and well-informed.

More recently, Marshall and Rossman (1989) have discussed elite interviewing as a qualitative data collection technique. They described an “elite” interview as a specialized treatment of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of respondent. “Elites are considered to be the influential, the prominent and the well-informed people in the organization or community. Elites are selected for interviews based on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 94).

Virtually all of the individuals who participated as respondents for my study, by Marshall and Rossman's definition, qualify as elites. An advantage of elite interviewing is that these individuals can provide an overview of their organization and its relationship with other organizations. The disadvantages include the problem of being able to access these elites as they are usually busy people, often difficult to reach, and have many constraints on their time.

Marshall and Rossman discussed some of the challenges in interviewing elites. In general, "[elites] resent the restrictions placed on them by narrow stereotypical questions. . . . They desire a more active interplay with the interviewer" (1989, p. 94). With this advice in mind, I selected as my interview strategy that of following a general rather than a specific interview guide. Dexter, too, suggested that elites prefer more of a discussion than a set of questions in an interview (1970, p. 56). These writers also advised that variation may also occur in the degree of control over the interview. On a couple of occasions, I experienced this challenge for control of the interview when the respondent began to assume the questioner's role during the interview. As Marshall and Rossman pointed out, these interviews place great demands on the interviewer who "must establish competence by displaying a thorough knowledge of the topic" (1989, p. 94) and project that competence through questioning.

Dexter underscored the importance for the interviewer to catch the respondent's meanings and to perceive the frameworks within which the respondent is talking. Dexter suggested that the interviewer must have the capacity to "listen with the third ear" (1970, p. 19). He cautioned that the purpose is not to get the interview but to collect data relevant to the study.

Observing

Observing an activity first hand provides the researcher with personal experience which can be invaluable in developing an understanding of a program, a process, or a setting. The purpose of observational data, according to Patton (1990), is:

> to *describe* [italics in the original] the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities, and the meanings of what was observed from the perspective of those observed. The descriptions must be factual, accurate, and thorough without being cluttered by irrelevant minutiae and trivia. The basic criterion to apply in judging a recorded observation is whether the observation permits the reader to enter into and understand the situation described. (p. 202)

Observation guide. To facilitate the gathering of observational data for this study, I devised a format of an observation guide that would suit my needs. The form acted as a guide and also as the cover sheet for notes recorded for a specific observation. For each activity I recorded the name of the activity or event, location, and date. The form served to prompt my observing and recording by focusing my attention to the physical arrangements, the participants and their roles, the program activities underway, process observations of interactions and communications, and general comments or quotes.

The observation data recorded frequently included a sketch of the layout of the setting. This proved helpful as a cue in later recreating a visual image of the setting when I reviewed my notes and recalled the situation during data analysis.

Observer involvement. The literature distinguishes observational strategies based on the extent to which the researcher as observer becomes a participant in the setting being studied. The continuum of involvement varies from complete participation through to spectator status. For the most part, my observer role was that of an "observer participant" rather than a "participant observer". Although I was an observer and not an active participant in the sessions, I nevertheless did have some interactions with the participants over session breaks.

My presence at the consultation sessions in Round 1 and Round 2, as an observer participant, did provide the opportunity to talk informally with people about their experiences with the policy development process and to seek out their perceptions of the events and the process. I always declared my research role and interest in the policy development process at the earliest opportunity during these conversations.

I did assume a participant role at one point early in the overall consultation process when I was invited to assist with the preparation of a written submission for Round 1. Another member of the team delivered the presentation at one of the consultation sessions. My role for the remainder of the process shifted to that of a researcher and observer participant.

Analyzing Documents

The first step in document analysis is that of actually identifying the documents and records which are relevant to and which will inform the study. Documents often provide the researcher with information for the study about things that cannot be observed. Once the documents have been identified, it is necessary to either gather or locate the items. Many of the documents for this study were prepared for public distribution and I was able to obtain copies which I could then use as reference documents throughout the study. The Department records to which I had access were maintained within the Department and I reviewed those records with permission while on site at the Department offices.

A variety of records were held in the Department as background papers, discussion papers, meeting notes, and reports on various aspects of the process. Access to specific documents and records was provided when requested. Many of these documents and records were reviewed simultaneous with conducting the interviews.

The review of records was conducted on-site at various government offices over a period of four months from October 1994, to January 1995. This review offered more precise details of time lines and the sequencing of events, activities and decisions than was sometimes provided by interviewees who were relying on memory. Throughout the data collection, I continued to add details onto a draft time line to develop a chronology of events for myself and to assist with the clarifying the sequencing of activities in the process under study. The exercise of developing a chronology of events (Appendix B) also assisted me with assessing the completeness of the data gathered for the study.

Departmental documents and records provided an elaboration on the process leading to the White Paper and contributed both in informing the interview process and in focusing the interview questions. Potential interviewees were also identified from the records based on their participation in the planning process.

The time spent reviewing records on site at the Department offices also allowed for informal conversations regarding the study. These discussions provided an opportunity to verify details of activities, events and decisions taken during the process and to increase my own understanding of the process. These discussions and the document analysis assisted greatly to contextualize the study.

Recording Field Notes

The field notebook or log is an essential tool for the qualitative researcher (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In this study my notebook was utilized for recording descriptions of interactions, events, and activities. The notes also recorded my ideas, hunches, first impressions, and jottings about patterns that began to emerge from the data. The field notes served throughout this study as a journal to record data, insights, and decisions regarding the research design and activities.

Conducting the Interviews

Pilot Phase

The value of a pilot study is well discussed in the literature on qualitative research. The pilot study provides the researcher with the opportunity to learn about "the research process, the interview schedule, observation techniques, and yourself" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 30). A pilot study also provides a chance to test the language of questions, the overall length and pacing of the interviews, and ways of relating to your respondents.

A relatively small number of individuals in the Department were involved in planning the activities and events which were part of the process leading to the development of the 1994 White Paper. This provided a limited "pool" of respondents from which to select individuals to participate in a pilot study. Therefore, rather than a formal pilot study, I followed an alternative approach suggested for those times when a formally designed pilot study is not feasible. I identified a "period of piloting" as described by Glesne and Peshkin (1992)

> that encompasses the early days of interviews with your actual respondents, rather than a set-aside period with specially designated pilot respondents. Such a period, if conducted in the right frame of mind -- the deep commitment to revise -- should suffice for pilot-testing purposes. (p. 68)

As part of this period of piloting, two individuals were approached to be respondents for the study; one was a participant within the Department and the other was a stakeholder external to the Department. They were each invited to participate in an interview and to also provide feedback to the interviewer on the process. The two were selected based on these criteria: each had achieved an advanced graduate degree, each had conducted research related to this field, and each was an experienced research interviewer. These individuals were able and willing to provide feedback to me as a researcher. They provided feedback on the written information supplied to the interviewees prior to the interview, on the interview techniques and process, and on the interview experience. I included this feedback and my own reflections in my field notes. Revisions were made to the development of the interview plan. Further, areas of questioning became more focused and the timing and pacing of the interview process was tightened.

Gathering Interview Data

During the data collection for this study, I conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with 21 individuals. Three respondents participated in a second interview. Two other respondents were also interviewed for a second time in a joint interview. Most first interviews were planned for approximately 60 minutes running time but, when possible, up to 90 minutes was scheduled to allow the opportunity to discuss both the study and the interview process. Two of the interviews were less than one hour in length: one was 40 minutes; the other was 50 minutes. Two interviews were two hours in length. Eight interviews ranged between one hour ten minutes to one hour forty minutes. Thirteen interviews lasted approximately one hour. Overall these 25 interviews totalled 29 hours and 40 minutes.

Table 1 provides a profile of the interviewees by sex as well as by the distribution of those internal and external to government.

	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Internal to Government	9	4	13
External to Government	5	3	8
Total	**14**	**7**	**21**

Table 1: Interviewees Profile--
Internal and External to Government

Table 2 provides an overview of the interviewees who were internal to government and illustrates their involvement through committee structures or political roles. These individuals frequently were involved in more than one committee, thus, the sum of the roles totals more than the number of participants. All internal interviewees were involved as a Resource Person at one or more consultation activities.

Steering Committee Member	Operations Committee Member	Divisional Task Force Member	Political Actor	Total Number of Interviewees
6	9	5	2	13

Table 2: Involvement in Policy Process--
Interviewees Internal to Government

Table 3 presents a similar overview of the interviewees who were external to government and illustrates their various roles as stakeholders in the community or the adult learning system. While these individuals frequently had multiple roles, I have indicated the dominant role which led to their involvement in the consultation process and their invitation to participate in this study. All external interviewees participated in one or more consultation activities.

Student	Faculty Member	Community-based Organization / Professional Association	Institutional Administrator	Business / Private Sector	Total Number of Interviewees
1	1	2	3	1	8

Table 3: Involvement in Policy Process--
Interviewees External to Government

The semi-structured interviews were conducted between October 4, 1994, and May 24, 1995. The interviews were distributed across several months as indicated in the following display. Generally, no more than two interviews were scheduled during a given week. The interviews were generally sequenced such that I was able to build a high degree of familiarity with the case and its events and activities before interviewing those who had more of an overall responsibility for the process. Dexter (1970) stated it quite succinctly when he advises the interviewer to plan the early interviews to meet the requirement for factual information and to "get the 'top' [person] later" (p. 41). Table 4 presents the scheduling of the interviews across the data gathering time frame.

Time frame	**Internal to Government**	**External to Government**	**Totals**
October 1994	8	1	9
November 1994	4	-	4
December 1994	1	1	2
January 1995	2	7	9
May 1995	1	-	1
Totals	16	9	25

Table 4: Scheduling of the Interviews

Data Management

Organizing the Data

In spite of many cautions offered to prepare me as a researcher for the amount of data generated by qualitative methods, I was still surprised and somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of data which I gathered for this study. I developed a data management scheme for the study as an initial organizing activity and applied it to the data as the data was collected.

Data files, both paper and electronic, were created to ensure that there was a system to handle the data on hand and to assist with the later retrieval of the data. A protocol file was maintained to retain general correspondence related to the study, file copies of consent forms, correspondence regarding the member review of the draft case story, and any other aspects related to the administration of the study.

Master Data Files

I maintained a "master" copy of all data in order to provide a context for the data in this study. A "working" copy of the data was created for analysis purposes. The master data files were held separately from working copy files of the data so that there was always a full set of data preserved within the master file and available to refer to throughout the analysis. Photocopies of documents or a hand written files were created as required for working copies during data analysis.

Interview Transcripts

All of the semi-structured interviews were audio taped with permission. During the interviews I had made some written field notes which helped me to manage the interview process as well as to track the topics and to outline the main points covered in the interview. A full verbatim transcript was prepared from the audio tape of each semi-structured interview. I personally transcribed each and all of the interview tapes. While this was very time consuming, it provided me the opportunity to develop an in-depth familiarity with the interview data. All interview audio tapes were retained during the study in a secure storage area.

The layout of the interview transcripts followed a common format when the computer files were generated. Each transcript was given a number and title. For each page of the transcript, a header was generated which included the transcript number, the title and the page number. Margins were set at the beginning of the transcription file to allow a 2.5 centimetre left margin and a 4.5 centimetre right margin. On the printed copy of the transcript, the left margin was sufficient to support line numbers and to mark important quotations, either during transcription or during later analysis; the right margin was wide enough to handle written notations and the indexing of topics from the analysis of the transcript. The line numbering option was used to number each line in the transcript continuously from the beginning of the transcript through to end of the transcript, not to restart with each new page. As no changes were later made in the format or settings, the line numbering references on the master transcripts, both computer and print copies, have remained consistent throughout the data analysis.

The master of the transcript computer files was created and retained in a secure location on a "write protected" floppy disk. One copy of these files was also maintained in a directory on my computer hard drive as a back-up file; a third set of complete files of the transcripts was stored in my computer in a different directory and these served as working files for various types of analysis and for electronic "cut and paste" functions. A fourth set of the transcripts was generated in a "hard copy" or print form and was used to write on and for indexing the data. New electronic files were created as cut and paste functions were performed and new configurations were created from data analysis across interviews.

Data Review

Once most of the data was gathered, I conducted a review of the data to ensure that it was as complete as possible. This meant a review to see that were no gaps of information in the data, that transcripts were complete, and that relevant documents and records had been gathered or analyzed. Patton (1990) recommends this review to help the researcher get a sense of the data and a sense of the quality of the data (p. 379). I was able to identify some informational items that were missing and other aspects of the data that required further exploration and clarification. The missing data items were pursued and respondents and other individuals were contacted to obtain the necessary clarification of information.

Data Analysis

Case Study Approach

One approach to qualitative analysis of a case study involves organizing the data by specific cases for in-depth study. When conducting a case study, the researcher gathers comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest. The starting point before analysis is to ensure that the data is as complete as possible. Applying this approach as a data analysis strategy allowed me to integrate strands of the research data from all sources and from each of the data gathering methods, that is interviews, observations, documents, records, and field notes.

I identified major activities or processes within the process under study and organized the data around those elements, treating each as a specific case. The elements which I identified included major components of the process such as the Round 1 Consultation, the Budget Roundtable, and the Round 2 Consultation. As part of the case analysis, I prepared an outline or case profile for these subsets of the case. To assist with fitting these components together, I also developed a chronological framework for each profile. These case profiles were then used to assist me in the preparation of a narrative for a case story. This stage of the analysis is described more fully in Chapter 4.

Analyzing the Data

Interview Data

The semi-structured interviews were all recorded on audio tape and then fully transcribed. During the process of transcribing the tapes, I continued to add to my field notes to record my comments, insights, questions and to document the connections which I was making with other data and with the literature. Once an interview transcript was completed, I read through the full transcript one more time while simultaneously listening to the audio tape of the interview in order to be thoroughly familiar with the context for the comments, the emphasis given to items, and the perception and information presented in the interviews. I then read through the printed transcript a second time and jotted notes or comments in the wide right-hand margin.

The transcripts were then divided into two groups: those with interviewees who were internal to government and involved in the planning processes, and those interviewees who were external to government who were involved or participated in the consultation process. The printed transcripts were reviewed one more time. Topics or phenomena relevant to the study were noted as a unit of data and each unit was given a label. Once the data was exposed in this manner, it was then organized into new categories across the interview data.

Working from a word processing computer file for each transcript, two new sets of computer files were created. One set of files provided a "profile" of each interview with the range of topics identified within each interview; the second set of files provided a "category" of related data units for each topic clustered from across the interviews. These new files were generated by selecting or highlighting a portion of the transcript text to be transferred to the new file and then applying an electronic copy and paste technique. A reference was created in the new files for each data unit by noting the interview number and line numbers which would correspond with the master transcript file. This served as a method of indexing the data for later analysis and retrieval.

Working from a printed copy of the interview profile files and the topic or category files allowed for further clustering of data units based on relationships that emerged. Potential quotations were identified and marked. Patterns and further questions resulted from this analysis.

Although a standardized interview guide was not used for this study, there were some questions which were common to most of the interviews. These questions from the interview guide also served as a descriptive framework for analysis across the interviews. Data units were grouped to provide answers to these questions and added to the richness of the description of the case.

Observation Data

For the most part, my observation data were recorded in handwritten notes; some data were recorded on audio tape. A summary was compiled following each observation and was added to the brief notes taken during the observation. Patton (1990, p. 377) offered the following formats to choose from in organizing or presenting findings of observations: chronology, key events, various settings, people, processes, or issues. I elected to prepare the fuller description of my observations based on a "key events" approach.

As these data were reviewed, summary notes were compiled to record the topics and issues which were presented through the observation data. These notes were incorporated with the data units from other data sources as the case profiles and narratives were developed.

Document Data

The review of documents and records through content analysis involved the identifying, coding and categorizing of patterns of data. The content of the data was named and classified as part of the analysis of this written data. Topics and patterns emerged from the data rather than being imposed upon the data. Meeting notes, discussion papers, and other records prepared by Department staff members as part of the strategic planning process and consultation process were reviewed for this study in addition to the documents available to the public.

Data units within the documents and records were identified in a fashion similar to the review of the interview data. These units were marked and later incorporated with other similar units across the data as several profile or descriptive cases were developed into a narrative to present a description and interpretation of this study.

Field Notes Data

The data contained within my field notes were linked to all the sources of data for this study as well as with all the techniques for gathering the data. Further, the field notes held some record of my decisions related to the design of this study. The notes, then, represented and presented a very eclectic data file. For the most part, the data were contained in handwritten notes supplemented sparsely by printed examples or references to support the notes.

The approach adopted for the analysis of my field notes was that of content review and analysis. The initial review contributed to the assessment of the completeness and sense of quality of the data overall. My field notes contained questions I had posed which required further information or exploration at various points in the study. A subsequent review of the field notes provided information which was incorporated into the case profiles and later into the case story. Topics or patterns were noted and considered later during the interpretation and writing of the case. My field notes were frequently reviewed throughout the analysis and contributed to insights developed during the course of the study.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

It is important to ensure that the outcomes of this research study are regarded as trustworthy. The constructs now generally accepted to describe rigour in qualitative inquiry are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These constructs have been incorporated into the design of this study to enhance its trustworthiness.

Credibility

The first construct is that of credibility in which "the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 145). The inquiry must be "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Guba and Lincoln suggested that the crucial question to determine credibility is "Do the data sources (most often human) find the inquirer's analysis, formulation, and interpretations to be credible (believable)" (1982, p. 246).

To develop a depth of understanding of the processes under study and to gather the level of detail needed to support and present that through the interpretation, the data collection activities for this study were scheduled over a 24-month period. This allowed for the gathering of data through formally scheduled activities, as well as through informal activities, over a lengthy period of time. Involvement in this study over this extended period of time contributed greatly to my understanding of the context of the study. While most of the interviewees were scheduled for a one-time interview, a research relationship was established with more than two-thirds of the interviewees so that informal discussions were held frequently throughout the study.

Once the narrative of the case story was constructed, I selected six participants in the study and invited them to be "readers" to review the presentation of the case story and to provide feedback on the credibility of the case to reality as they knew it. These member checks provided feedback on the interpretation and representation of the case story and on the credibility of the study. The feedback discussions added to my understanding and thus the interpretation of the case study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

During the observations at the Round 2 sessions, I sought out the opportunity to also gather observations and perceptions from other participants. This helped to add new ideas and meanings to my own observations as well as to verify my observations. These discussions and the member checks also helped me to identify biases which I might bring to the study.

Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. The interpretative researcher discounts generalizability as such but "nevertheless believes that some degree of transferability is possible under certain circumstances" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). According to Guba and Lincoln, these circumstances exist if "thick" descriptions are available about both the "sending" and "receiving" contexts to make reasonable judgement about the degree of transferability (p. 247). The responsibility for transferability, however, rests more with the investigator who would make that transfer than with the original investigator (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). This construct of transferability does not fit particularly well with case study research which values the uniqueness of the case study. The findings of this study may, however, serve to inform in some manner the planning of other policy development projects which include consultation processes.

Dependability

The third construct is dependability "in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study as well as changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 146). The research design in a qualitative study is often emergent.

For this study, I established a system to organize and manage the data and to create an "audit trail" for the methodological steps and decision points for the study and its design. Through this system, it would be possible to undertake a review of procedures for the study, if necessary. The documentation on hand includes correspondence with the Department, listings of possible study participants, study protocol, letters to study participants, signed consent forms, listing of dates and locations for interviews, audio tapes of interviews, transcripts of interviews, observation notes and documentation from Round 1 and Round 2 sessions, field notes with questions regarding study design decisions, field notes with records of research activities and data, document notes from onsite document collection, and various analytical notes generated throughout the study. The documentation is held in a secure location.

Confirmability

This construct is related to the traditional concept of objectivity. As the researcher, I must be aware of the assumptions which I bring to a research study as these will ultimately influence and shape the research. The practice of recording observer notes and field notes helped to surface some of those assumptions and biases. Discussions with a faculty advisor who posed critical questions about the research design also assisted in this regard. Further discussions with two colleagues regarding my analysis of the case helped to challenge my perspectives and interpretations.

Triangulation or the application of multimethods will also contribute to the trustworthiness of the data. This study utilized multiple methods of gathering the data, as well as multiple data sources to provide multiple perspectives on issues. Triangulation of the findings or bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point contributes to the confidence of the findings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Research Ethics

Ethics Review

This research study was designed to conform with the ethical guidelines provided in the *University Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants* (University of Alberta, 1991). In September 1994, my research proposal was submitted to a Review Committee within the [then] Department of Educational Administration for an ethics review; approval was received. The review addressed many of the ethical issues which I later discussed with each of the participants in this study and which are outlined in this document within the description of the methodology for this study. The committee review considered that the study design would:

- provide a clear statement of the research project
- explain the nature and the purpose of the research study to the participants
- attend to the matter of informed consent for the participants
- provide the right for participants to opt out of the study at any time
- create procedures to address anonymity and confidentiality issues, and
- assure that the study would not be threatening to the participants or to others.

Ethical Considerations in This Study

As with any qualitative study, there are many issues or considerations which surfaced throughout the course of the study. The issues presented here reflect the complexity of undertaking case study research on an emergent process with a government department during a time of transition. These issues relate to the nature of research and my role as the researcher, the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity and confidentiality, and the risks of participating in the study.

The data gathering for this study spanned twenty-four months from August 1993, to July 1995, varying in intensity according to the schedule and the nature of the research activities related to gaining access for the study, observing at events, organizing and participating in interviews, and gathering documents and other specific information related to the study. As I undertook these activities and interacted with individuals in government and in the community, I took the opportunity at an early point in the conversations to identify both my interest in this research study and my role as the researcher for the study. This was to ensure that other individuals were clear on why I was in that location and of the specific role that I carried, and that further discussion was with the others' knowledge that I was there as a researcher. This was often important to address as I needed to identify this research role as separate from my other perceived roles as an individual, a learner, or a professional within the adult learning system in the province.

Individuals were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary and that, at their request, I would stop the tape recording of an interview at any time. Further, individuals were aware that they could opt out of the study at any time. During separate interviews, two interviewees requested that the audio taping stop while they reflected on an aspect of the study; taping later commenced with their permission. Two other individuals offered personal reflections and asked that those be "off the record". All of these requests were honoured.

Various procedures were developed and put in place throughout the study to assist with maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents in the study. My involvement with this research study was widely known within the Department and the community. During the study discussions and interactions with individuals in the Department and in the community extended well beyond the circle of those who participated in interviews as part of this study. There were, however, a number of challenges which were often beyond my control but related to maintaining anonymity, particularly with respect to the Department context. This was due to the fact that many of the Department staff members who worked on this project over time also were in close working proximity to each other. As voice mail had not been introduced on the government telephone system, telephone messages left for individuals to confirm meetings or interviews were sometimes taken by a receptionist and were often deposited in open message boxes in a common office area, thus the confidentiality of the message might be at risk. It was also common to encounter staff members in hallways or offices while I was in the office buildings. During those encounters, the questions or comments from the staff member may have compromised to some extent the anonymity of his or her participation in the study if other individuals overheard the conversation.

A specific request was made for permission to use the name of the Department in the written case story and my dissertation document. This was readily agreed to by Department officials and there was an acknowledgement that identifying the Department was important in contributing to an understanding of the context of the case itself.

The nature of this research study is not one in which there is risk of personal harm. Participants, in fact, seemed willing to assist with the study and to have the opportunity to reflect on some of the issues under discussion. The degree of risk for participants in a study of this kind may, however, include the possible professional harm which could result from the disclosure of information from the interviews or from the opinions expressed. I have tried to exercise sensitivity with respect to the use of quotations reported within this document and have cited the quotations anonymously.

Prior to finalizing this document, I selected a "reader" who had broad familiarity with this case study. This reader reviewed a printout of all the interview quotations included in this document and was asked to review the quotations as they appeared in the draft dissertation and to provide me with any feedback as to identity issues so that, if necessary, further sensitivity might be exercised as the document was finalized.

Lastly, concluding the writing up of this case study is occurring three years after the data has been collected. During that time period many changes have taken place for the interviewees in this study. Many of those who were interviewed who were internal to government are no longer in the same positions nor even with government due to department restructuring, retirement, or their own interest in pursuing other career opportunities. The time which has elapsed now allows all participants and stakeholders to develop some distance in viewing the details of this case study.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS OF PUBLIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STORY

This chapter presents the story of this case study. This case story brings together a description and an overview of the case, the major activities and events, and the processes undertaken in developing the 1994 White Paper. The introductory section of this chapter outlines the preparation undertaken for the writing of the narrative of this case story. This is followed by the discussion of the member review of the case. The remainder of this chapter is a presentation of the story of the development of the 1994 White Paper bounded by the time frame of July 1992 to October 1994.

Preparation of the Case Story

Organizing the Data

Data for this research study were gathered through interviews, observations, document analysis, and the recording of field notes. As this was a case study, I determined that creating a story line for the case would be one outcome of organizing and analyzing the volumes of data collected. In preparation for writing the narrative for the case story, the data from each source were reviewed and organized in a chronological fashion. Using the time frame of the case as July 1992 to October 1994 a display of activities and events was created and a chronology was developed for the case (Appendix B).

Creating Case Profiles and the Case Story

I organized the data to provide a description which was as complete as possible for each of the major activities or processes in the case. A case profile for each major activity or process was constructed based on this information. The information in each profile was recorded in point form and compiled to ensure that the information was sufficiently comprehensive to provide a description of each activity or process under study. Additional data was gathered through further document collection and through contacts and informal interviews with individuals in those instances where additional data was still required.

Using the framework of the case chronology and the information in the case profiles, a narrative of the case story was prepared to bring together in one place a description and overview of the case, the major activities and events, and the processes undertaken in developing the 1994 White Paper.

Member Review of the Case Story

After the case story was drafted, I contacted six of the interviewees from the research study with a request that each of them review a draft of the story. I indicated that I was interested in any feedback, perceptions or comments on the draft. In a cover letter to each reader, I suggested the following to help direct the feedback:

- accuracy -- did this happen, in this order, with these players
- information gaps -- important things that should have been included but were missed
- terminology -- any jargon or labels or titles that were missed or misused
- tone -- the description should be about events rather than my judgement and about what individuals did/said; was there too much or too little emphasis on certain events
- names -- should the names of individuals be used for some positions
- readability -- is the style too informal, would more or fewer headings help, do dates get confusing with the back and forth description of events, are descriptions clear, general comments on writing style.

Two individuals provided comments from a non-departmental perspective; the other four commented from the base of working on the project within the Department. The feedback was collected in two waves. In the first round, four individuals were provided with the draft document and the feedback was collected. After revisions for clarity and style, a subsequent draft was forwarded for the second round to the final two Departmental readers.

Four of the six readers provided written comments. All of the individuals offered verbal feedback and a discussion of the case. In one instance the feedback was provided during a scheduled interview which was audio-taped and later transcribed. This was a joint interview with two individuals participating. The interplay of conversation, reflection and information shared between the two provided a rich and valuable opportunity to probe and gather further data on certain aspects of the case. To ensure accuracy and add to the completeness of the case, copies of some additional Departmental records were provided to me following the interview. All feedback meetings added new perspectives to my understanding of the case. The feedback from all indicated that the presentation of the case was thought to be accurate. Three of the individuals commented that there were aspects of the case that they had learned of through reading the case story.

Revision of the Case Story

The additional data gathered through these feedback sessions allowed me to revise the case story and to enhance both its clarity and quality. As the writer of the narrative, I continued to carry responsibility for the presentation of the case and any decisions to incorporate the feedback and additional data received. The following narrative, then, presents the case story as I had come to understand it by May 1995 and as it was revised by October 1995.

The Development of the 1994 White Paper: The Case Story

Preparing for Policy Development, Spring 1992

It had been twenty years since the 1972 report of the Commission on Educational Planning, *A Choice of Futures* (Worth, 1972). Through that Commission, the Alberta government had undertaken a comprehensive policy planning process for adult education and the postsecondary system. The Commission's report contributed to the creation of a new government department, the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, and recommended the adoption of several policy initiatives which shaped the development of the next 20 years of adult and postsecondary education in the province.

By the spring of 1992, the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education had recognized the need to undertake a new planning initiative for the system. The challenge now, as the Deputy Minister saw it, was to position the system to effectively deal with the reality of change -- not just in fiscal terms but more specifically in terms of the social, technological, economic and demographic changes that were taking place in the province. That challenge was one of rethinking the postsecondary system, both its structure and its operation, to enable it to meet future demands.

The provincial government hosted Toward 2000 Together, a roundtable conference on Alberta's economic future in Calgary in May 1992. This was billed as a Premier's conference and representatives from most sectors of the province's economy attended. The recommendations from the conference had some implications for new demands on education and training (Alberta Government, 1992).

In June 1992, the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education convened a meeting of senior managers and directors of [the then] Department of Advanced Education (hereafter referred to as the Department) to outline the challenge that she saw for the system and to call for a strategic planning and public consultation process that would produce a policy discussion paper for the Minister. This consultation would focus initially on key stakeholders but the Deputy Minister spoke as well about wider ranging discussions to involve the general public once policy options were prepared.

Also in June 1992, the incoming chair of the Council of Presidents of the Public Colleges and Technical Institutes (referred to as the Council of Presidents) wrote to the Deputy Minister outlining some issues of concern to the Presidents and requesting a meeting with her. A meeting with institutional Presidents was scheduled for the following month. The Deputy Minister presented the Presidents with fiscal information as well as social and demographic trends which would place future demands on the system. They discussed the implications for the postsecondary system and agreed that it was timely to view this as an opportunity for strategic planning for the system.

Initiating Policy Planning, July - December 1992

Even before the Deputy Minister met with the Presidents in July 1992, she had already initiated the planning process. The Deputy Minister had asked the Assistant Deputy Minister -Operations to form a task force of senior people within the Department to begin a strategic planning process. After its first meeting in early July, the group began to meet on a regular, nearly weekly basis for the next several months. This Divisional Task Force discussed other activities that could also be part of the planning process. These included creating an independent think tank, conducting workshops with each institution, and inviting institutions to submit briefs on the strategic issues affecting the education of adults. Their discussion recognized the value of involving stakeholders in the process but they were some uncertainty about how and when to do that. That uncertainty began to extend to a lack of clarity about the focus of the work of the Divisional Task Force and where the Task Force was headed.

The Task Force began several of its own activities including developing an inventory of department policy documents, legislation and contracts; preparing an analysis of enrolment demand; identifying trends affecting the system; and generating a list of issues under consideration in the various branches of the Department. As well, a review of reform of higher education in other jurisdictions was begun. Lengthy and intense debates developed around two issues: (a) whether to place the focus on the postsecondary system or on learning opportunities, and (b) whether the Department saw its clients as the institutions or as the students/adult learners. The work of this Task Force developed no consensus around a future vision for the Department.

Meanwhile, during July and August 1992, the Assistant Deputy Minister-Operations and a consultant began to put together the membership for the think tank. The group would be known by several names but later the "ideas" committee. The group comprised ten individuals who brought a cross-section of experience to the committee: some chosen from the universities; colleges and technical institutes; some invited from the private sector; but all from Alberta. Institutional Presidents had provided names of staff members as potentials to draw on in the formation of the group. The committee was to offer generic strategies and tactical options from which the Department might choose and use to further develop ideas and proposals. The group met from October through to December 1992, when a draft report was submitted to the Department.

While the Minister acknowledged the external "ideas" committee, the Minister chose not to make public the names of the committee members indicating that this might interfere with the committee's ability to work independently. The media quickly labelled the group the "secret" committee. The committee advised the Minister and Department that the secretive notion was neither necessary nor wise and that it could undermine the work of the committee. Nonetheless, the membership of the committee was not made public and remained "secret".

In mid-September 1992, the Minister of Advanced Education announced a plan for the Department to conduct a wide-ranging public debate in 1993 on the issues and strategic options confronting the postsecondary system in Alberta. He wrote to all chairs of the Boards of Governors of the public postsecondary institutions informing them that the Department had begun a strategic planning process and inviting the institutions to submit briefs on issues.

During the Fall months, 1992, the Deputy Minister set up meetings with senior administrators at each of the public postsecondary institutions. She used these meetings to offer a fiscal overview for the Department and to identify a range of factors and trends affecting the system. These presentations served to underscore the critical need for the system to change in response to these factors as well as to provide a context for policy planning. The meetings offered an opportunity for others to develop an understanding of the challenges facing the system.

Numerous activities were now part of this policy planning process for Advanced Education and were running parallel through the fall months of 1992. The internal Divisional Task Force of the Department was involved in strategic planning. The external Committee was developing strategic options for the postsecondary system. The Deputy Minister was making presentations and meeting with senior administrators at each of the public postsecondary institutions. Staff members of the postsecondary institutions were preparing briefs to present their perspectives on issues and options for the system.

By December 1992, the "ideas" committee had submitted a draft of its report to Advanced Education but continued to work on refining the document for another month or so. Advanced Education received 25 submissions from institutions by the December deadline. The Divisional Task Force had initially hoped to have its recommendations prepared for late October. However, it was not until late December 1992, that the Task Force report went to the Deputy Minister. The report submitted provided not a strategic plan but rather a discussion of issues facing the postsecondary system.

In late February 1993, the Deputy Minister met with members of the "ideas" committee. The committee's final report provided some strategic alternatives and policy choices for Departmental consideration. That report, *For All our Futures: Strategies for the Future of Post-secondary Education in Alberta* (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1992, December), was somewhat controversial within the Department. Its release was delayed. Given the earlier media coverage of the "secret" committee, the fact that the committee had made its recommendations and the report was not being distributed only added to the media interest.

During this same time other government departments were also involved in planning. In the Fall, 1992, the Minister of Alberta Career Development and Employment set up a Ministerial Consultative Committee on Labour Market Development and Training. This 12-person committee represented a variety of stakeholder perspectives from industry, labour, equity groups and training organizations. The Committee's mandate was to recommend to government ways to increase labour market development and training partnerships in Alberta. The Committee deliberated extensively through the fall and winter months. They sought input through written submissions and through a stakeholder workshop held in March 1993. Recommendations were refined and submitted in a report, *Ministerial Consultative Committee on Labour Market Development and Training* (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, April), to the Minister in April 1993.

Political Context, Fall 1992

Amid this focus on the future, the Premier of the province of Alberta, the Honourable Don Getty, announced his resignation in mid-September, 1992. The decision was not entirely unexpected. Within a very short time nine contenders were vying for the role as leader of the Progressive Conservative party and the position as the next premier of the province. Many campaign themes carried the tone of fiscal restraint and the need to do things differently.

Ralph Klein won the party leadership race and was sworn in as Premier on December 14, 1992. He introduced a smaller cabinet by restructuring and amalgamating some departments. The ministries of Advanced Education and of Career Development and Employment were combined into a new department to be named Advanced Education and Career Development and headed by a new Minister (hereafter referred to as the Minister).

Expanding the Scope of Planning, January 1993

The amalgamation of departments was underway. For those involved in the policy planning activity within these Departments, the period from early December 1992, to mid-February 1993, was a difficult time. Until early February 1993, the new Advanced Education and Career Development Department had two Deputy Ministers. On February 6, 1993, Premier Klein announced plans to cut six Deputy Ministers positions from the government organization. Soon after, the former Deputy Minister for Advanced Education was appointed as the Deputy Minister for the new Department of Advanced Education and Career Development (hereafter referred to as the Department).

The Deputy Minister now had to bring the two units (Advanced Education and Career Development and Employment) together as an integrated Department. At this point there was still uncertainty about the mandate for the new Department. Earlier forms of these two departments had been united once before. From the early 1970s to the early 1980s, Alberta had a Department of Advanced Education and Manpower. A departmental restructuring had then resulted in the establishment of separate departments of Advanced Education and of Career Development and Employment. Each had then gone its own direction and had developed its own organizational values and culture. Now these units were to be one Department again within a new government. A certain level of tension existed between staff members of the two ministries as they joined together.

In March 1993, while still working through the process of Department amalgamation, the Deputy Minister moved forward with the policy planning process. The scope of the planning had now expanded with the increased breadth of the new Department. The policy planning task was seen as having two components: (a) the development of policy options, and (b) the provision for input to the policy process through public consultation. Two Assistant Deputy Ministers in the new Department were identified to provide leadership to the planning.

The former Advanced Education Assistant Deputy Minister of the Operations Division, was appointed as the Assistant Deputy Minister for Institutional Support in the new Department. He gathered a small working group from across the new Department to create a Strategic Options Committee. The task for this working group was to integrate the information and ideas collected to date from committee work, internal and external, and other sources in order to develop options and policy direction for consideration.

Another Assistant Deputy Minister had come from Career Development and Employment. The new Assistant Deputy Minister for Information and Policy Services was given responsibility for planning the public consultation process. A small committee in the Communications branch began to search out expertise for conducting public consultation. Recognizing that the consultation exercise was to be an activity linked with other policy initiatives, this committee recommended that a specialist in public consultation be contracted, that dedicated resources within the Department be identified for the consultation process, and that the planning be led by the Deputy Minister.

Organizing for Consultation, Spring 1993

Through a selected tendering process a consulting team was contracted to provide consultation expertise to the Department. A Project Coordinator for the Department was appointed to support the coordination for the consultation and to implement the day to day decisions and activities. The planning structure established for the consultation process included a Steering Committee, an Operations Committee, a Project Secretariat, and other task and analysis groups as required.

The Steering Committee provided direction and coordination for the consultation project. This Committee of eight members was led by the Deputy Minister and comprised executive managers of the Department, the Director of the Communications Branch, the chair of the Project Secretariat, and a representative of Alberta Education. The Project Coordinator later met regularly with this Committee.

The Operations Committee planned the day to day work of this consultation activity. The Committee was chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister (Information and Policy Services) and its 10 members ranged across all divisions of the Department. The Project Secretariat was to provide research, analytical and advisory support to both the Steering and Operations Committees throughout the public consultation and the strategic planning processes. The Secretariat comprised a small but focused group of policy researchers and writers. The Secretariat chair was also a member on the other two committees.

The early discussions during spring, 1993, at the Steering Committee and the Operations Committee meetings, focused on the consultation process and approaches that might be undertaken. Initially there were no plans nor prototypes to follow for this consultation process. The Operations and Steering Committees simultaneously worked through the "why, what, and how"of the process. Many of the plans did evolve over time. By June, terms of reference were developed for the project and each committee. By June as well, objectives for the consultation were drafted and, following many revisions, were approved in September 1993. Other objectives were added as later phases of the project were formulated and these continued to be refined as the planning was underway. Overall, these objectives served as an important reference point for the planners throughout.

There were long debates within the Department as to who was the client of the Department. There was gradual acceptance of the concept that the student or adult learner was the client of the Department. Departmental terminology in use began to shift from a focus on "postsecondary institutions" to a focus on the client as the "adult learner." This change also provided for the inclusion of employment training, apprenticeship, and other adult education programs which were also encompassed by the new Department. The lexicon of "adult learning" was gradually introduced into the daily vocabulary of Department members and the documents that they produced and distributed. This focus on the adult learner as client was later reflected through the emphasis of the learner-centred philosophy in the White Paper.

Introducing Business Plans

The new government of Premier Klein focused its attention on its fiscal plan. The 1993-94 Provincial Budget was announced in Spring, 1993. On May 6, 1993, the Provincial Treasurer delivered his budget speech presenting a four-year plan to bring spending in line with revenue and to eliminate waste and unnecessary duplication. He spoke of a "new kind of government" and indicated that the government would implement a three-year budget planning process. Soon after, the Premier asked that the Legislature be dissolved and a provincial election was called for June 15, 1993.

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation

The day following the budget speech, the Minister announced the consultation process for the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development. *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* had been selected as the theme for the consultation. The news release quoted the Minister explaining "the purpose of this public consultation is to set a new direction for the future of adult education in the province . . . and to design an innovative plan to get there. The consultations," he said, "would focus on ensuring that Albertans would have access to lifelong learning opportunities that would respond to their social and economic needs" (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, May). The Department planned to distribute background information on issues and a new direction to Albertans in early Summer, 1993. Then, following a review of written input, roundtable discussions would be held with stakeholders to consider possible strategic responses. The news release stated that the government's action plan for its role in adult learning would be prepared by Spring, 1994.

At the same time as he announced the consultation, the Minister invited the chairs of the Boards of public postsecondary institutions to a July workshop to provide input into the Department's budget plans for the 1994-95 fiscal year.

Following the May 1993, announcement of the consultation process, the Operations Committee and Steering Committee continued planning and often met weekly, and sometimes jointly, to select the most appropriate strategy for the consultation process. The consultation was a complex process and the members worked through several issues: where to hold the consultations, who to invite, how to invite, what agenda to follow, and how to conduct the sessions. Committee members noted that some of these decisions could not be finalized until after the outcome of the June provincial election was known.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Deputy Minister (Institutional Support) and his small Strategic Options Committee had continued through the winter and early spring of 1993 with their work to analyze and integrate the growing amount of information into issues, options, and strategies. The members of this committee were preparing strategic options which could be offered for public review.

A debate developed within the Operations Committee around the sequencing of work. Background work on policy issues and options had been actively underway for several months within the Department. The issue debated was this: should the public consultation process first gather information and then Department staff develop strategic options OR should the public consultation provide information to modify strategic options already being considered? It was determined that the Strategic Options groups would continue to work on developing options; that they could not set aside this task while awaiting public input. Tension within the Department was evident around this issue.

A further concern surfaced from members of the Operations Committee on how information from the consultation process could actually be incorporated into the policy process and how the two processes would be linked. This was eventually accomplished by introducing strategies such as involving staff in more than one role or committee, providing timely summaries of information coming from the consultation process to policy writers and vice versa, and by carefully managing the timing and coordination of activities and events related to both processes.

Amid this discussion, the Secretariat members were preparing the public consultation documents providing the background on issues and information on the system. As these were drafted, the Operations Committee members and the consultation consultants continued to review and suggest revisions. The Steering Committee received the package for final review and approval. This writing and review process began in early spring and continued late into August 1993.

Planning discussions within the Department in June 1993, focused on the outcome of the policy and consultation processes. The intended outcome was a policy paper that the Minister could recommend to Cabinet. This paper would offer a policy framework and action plan to guide the development of adult learning in Alberta for the next decade. The objectives for the process continued to be revised. The committees continued to reference the objectives as a guide to focus their planning process throughout the project.

Provincial Election, June 1993

On June 15, 1993, Ralph Klein and the Progressive Conservative Party were reelected. The Progressive Conservative campaign had focused upon deficit reduction and a balanced provincial budget by 1997 and proposed an overall 20% reduction in budget expenditures. The Provincial Treasurer renewed his call for three-year business plans from each government department and for roundtable sessions that would allow for public input into the development of those plans. Government departments were to begin submitting their business plans during the fall months. Following the election, the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development was again confirmed to his appointment.

Several staff members within Advanced Education and Career Development expressed concern with the time lines for the Treasurer's directive for submitting the business plans. The Department was launching into a public consultation process to set a new direction for the future of adult education in the province and, meanwhile, the Department was being asked to develop and submit for approval a three-year business plan that could preempt directional choices. The Department's business plan was being drafted just as the public consultation was underway. The concern expressed in the consultation planning meetings was that the business planning process would compromise the integrity of the consultation process.

Fiscal Planning Workshop, July 1993

On July 22, 1993, the Minister convened a two-day workshop for representatives of the public postsecondary institutions. The purpose of the workshop was to identify potential options for reducing government grants to postsecondary institutions in 1994-95 that would be consistent with maintaining and increasing access over the next decade. The Minister had invited chairs of the Boards of Governors and institutional presidents (universities, public colleges, technical institutes) to attend and to bring along one other board member and one other administrator. Representatives from the publicly funded vocational colleges and hospital-based schools of nursing were also invited.

Prior to the workshop, institutional representatives were asked to submit proposals for action that would lead to improved cost effectiveness of the system for 1994-95. More than 175 ideas were submitted and these were clustered into categories for discussion. The workshop was designed to allow participants to focus on the categories and ideas and to develop specific options for the Minister. The suggestions coming from the workshop were then separated into two time frames: those that focused on 1994-95 and those that extended beyond 1994-95.

The summary document from the workshop reported recurring recommendations and general themes. These workshop discussions would eventually become part of the overall input to the consultation process. The Minister concluded the workshop by commenting that this was the first time that representatives of all the public postsecondary institutions had been together in such a process.

Earlier in July 1993, the provincial associations for students of the colleges and of the universities had requested that the Minister allow student representatives to attend the July Fiscal Planning Workshop. Because of the focus on institutional budgets, the students were told that it was not seen as appropriate for them to attend. However, one student did attend as a Board representative of one of the colleges. She participated and contributed at least one student voice to the sessions. Although the Minister had indicated that the workshop would not focus on tuition fees, some discussion on the tuition issue took place. The provincial students' associations followed up the workshop with a call to the Minister on this point and requested a meeting with him. The Minister agreed and met with students later in August. He asked them to prepare the agenda for the meeting. The Minister later ensured the invitation of the student association representatives to participate in subsequent consultation activities.

One theme reported from the Fiscal Planning Workshop in late July 1993, called for a vision and mission statement for the postsecondary system. The Workshop report indicated that there was no shared vision of what the postsecondary system was to accomplish and no shared understanding of what it should look like or how it should operate. Agreement on a vision and mission statement had not emerged from the work of the Task Force in the Department in 1992.

Earlier, following a retreat of the Department senior staff members in Spring, 1993, the Deputy Minister had already asked one of the branch directors to lead a team of Department staff to work on preparing a vision statement for adult learning in Alberta. This vision statement was intended to guide and inform departmental strategic planning and policy development. The Visioning Team was given until November 1, 1993, to complete their work.

Following from the recommendations at the July Fiscal Planning Workshop, the Department set up other working groups. The workshop report recommended work groups for human resource and labour issues, communications issues, funding issues, measurement issues, and rationalization issues.

The Consultation Strategy

The Steering Committee had now agreed upon a strategy for the consultation process. At the July Fiscal Planning Workshop, the Minister shared an overview of that process with the participants noting two distinct phases. The Minister indicated that the first phase would be an opportunity for Departmental representatives to share current information with institutions, students, parents, and employees and employers. Suggestions could be offered to the Department through written submissions and a series of regional meetings. The plan also called for a second series of regional stakeholder workshops or roundtables to consider the ideas and options put forward in the first round. The plans for the second phase, however, later changed in format.

The public information package being prepared by the Secretariat was finally readied for public distribution in late August 1993. The package included four items: a letter from the Minister; two documents prepared to provide background (*Issues and Questions,* Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993a, September, and *Profile and Trends,* Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993b, September*);* and a newsletter (*Keeping You Informed,* Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Summer) which outlined the process and provided information about the consultation.

A comprehensive mail data base for the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project had been compiled by the Department and seven thousand packages were distributed through direct mail. Advertisements were placed in daily and major weekly newspapers throughout the province. Additional copies of the package could be received by dialling a 1-800 number or sending a written or fax request. The Communications branch of the Department distributed more than ten thousand information packages.

Round One Consultation, September - October 1993

Regional consultation meetings were held in thirteen locations across the province. At each location four sessions were organized and were conducted over two days.

Sessions offered participants the option of attending in the afternoon or evening. A delay in mailing the information packages led to later than planned dates for the consultation meetings which had now been rescheduled for September 27 to October 14, 1993. Four additional community or outreach meetings were also added into this schedule. The outreach meetings were planned to respond to specific requests for the opportunity for discussion and input from communities or groups that could not easily access the other consultation meetings or locations.

Written briefs or submissions were also invited by the Department and were to be submitted by October 31. About 475 written submissions were received. Round One of the consultation was underway.

Training sessions were conducted to brief and to prepare Department staff members on the roles of various individuals linked with this consultation: facilitators, resource persons, recorders, and responders. Information was also offered on responding to the media. The consultants contracted for the consultation provided (non-government) facilitators for each session of Round One. Teams of both Department staff and consultants/ facilitators were organized for each consultation meeting location. Staff recorders documented each meeting by making notes designed to capture the points emphasized by presenters. It was required that at the end of each day of consultation meetings that a debriefing for the team be held to allow each team to review and to identify themes from the information presented. This debriefing information became an additional and separate source of information for the consultation process.

This Round One consultation was to be seen as the "Department's consultation". Department staff members were asked to provide information and to listen rather than to debate issues or to advocate solutions. Senior executives from the Department attended and participated in the regional consultation meetings as resource persons and as responders.

Approximately thirteen hundred Albertans attended the September-October, 1993, sessions. Individuals wishing to make a presentation were asked to preregister for the meetings in order to assist Department staff members in preparing an agenda or schedule for the presentations. However, the sessions were also open to the public. Some opportunity for dialogue and discussion between the participants and Department staff members occurred in the smaller centres but only limited interaction took place at the sessions in Edmonton and Calgary due to the format selected, the volume of presentations, and time constraints.

Those individuals attending the Round One meetings included, among others, representatives from: post secondary institutions, students, faculty members, community agencies and interests, further education councils, literacy programs, employment training programs, private colleges and trainers, both First Nations and Métis communities, some business interests, and the general public. Departmental staff members had been concerned that the meetings would be dominated by the presentations from postsecondary institutions. Institutional representatives did attend and make presentations but the overwhelming participation actually came from the community level.

Many of those receiving the consultation package by mid-September, 1993, had known for some time that the Department was undertaking a policy review as both the current and previous Ministers had made announcements to that effect. However, several individuals who attended the regional consultation meetings commented on the short time lines allowed to prepare presentations and written response following the receipt of the information package. Some stakeholders spoke of the skepticism they held about the limited impact that their presentations might have. Their comments reflected concern that the government (Department) had already made decisions about future actions and that the consultation would not influence policy change. While this consultation was recognized as an opportunity for input, it was also acknowledged that this was a new process for many individuals and organizations and there was a level of uncertainty about how to effectively participate in the public consultation process.

One week after the Round One regional consultation meetings concluded, a similar meeting was scheduled for Departmental staff members. They were invited to provide written submissions, to make presentations, and to discuss the issues. The meeting followed a format similar to that of the regional consultation meetings. The recorders' notes from this Departmental meeting and written submissions from staff members were documented and recorded but held separate from the public information.

Department staff members and the consultants had set up a computerized data base to handle information from the written submissions, the recorders' notes from Round One and the outreach community meetings, the team debriefing notes, the staff consultation and the staff members written submissions. A computerized theme analysis of this information was forwarded to a subgroup of the Secretariat (the White Paper Working Group) who prepared discussion or theme papers based on the analysis. Using a summary of Round One information, the consultants prepared a second *Keeping You Informed* newsletter (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Fall) which was mailed to the nearly ten thousand on the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project mail list. The newsletter focused on what people had said during the consultations, what they had provided in written submissions during Round One of the consultation, what the Department would now do with the information, and how the information would be used. An electronic newsletter was also created to provide Department staff members with an update on the process.

Concurrent Consultations, Fall 1993

During September and October 1993, the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development also began a review of its legislation, regulations and operating policies as part of a government-wide regulatory review. Public institutions and other groups and organizations were asked for input. This input also became part of the now very large information data base for the consultation process. During this same time, a review of the student loan repayment process was conducted for the Students Finance Board. This latter review was to identify options for improving the flexibility in the student loan repayment system. Concurrently, there were also consultations or workshops held on other specific issues such as private sector investment in training, program rationalization, and accountability frameworks. Meanwhile, the Visioning Team continued to work through its process.

Budget Roundtable, November 1993

Throughout the summer, the budget planning process had continued in the Department. The Provincial Treasurer had asked all government departments to prepare budget scenarios outlining the implications of a possible 20% and 40% reduction over the next three years. This information would serve as the basis for establishing the reduction targets to be released to all Departments later in the fall.

The Provincial Treasurer had advised government departments to consult broadly and beyond their traditional stakeholders in developing the business plans. Early in November 1993, Advanced Education and Career Development announced that it was holding a Budget Roundtable on November 19-20. Concern was expressed in planning meetings within the Department that the Budget Roundtable should be seen by the public as an integral part of the ongoing consultations and not a side activity, yet there was further concern that this might affect the integrity of the policy consultation process. .

While the Round One consultation meetings were underway, the Assistant Deputy Minister--Institutional Support and his staff, who had planned the July Fiscal Planning Workshop, began planning the November Budget Roundtable. This Budget Roundtable was an invited consultation involving 150 participants. Approximately half of the participants were the same institutional stakeholders who had attended the July Fiscal Planning Workshop. The remainder was drawn mainly from other stakeholders and interested parties who had participated in the Round One consultation meetings. Within Advanced Education and Career Development, this invitation list for the Budget Roundtable was assumed to provide that broad base of participation requested by the Treasurer. The list offered approximately equal representation from both 'educational deliverers' and 'educational recipients'.

Departmental staff members working with a team of management consultants prepared a 'workbook' for the Budget Roundtable that provided information, posed questions and presented options for discussion and consideration. The options presented in the workbook were gathered from the July Fiscal Planning Workshop, from the Round

One consultation meetings and submissions, and from Department background discussions and activities. The Budget Roundtable workbook was then sent to the thousands of names on the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project mail list and to the invited 150 roundtable participants.

The Budget Roundtable was structured with plenary sessions, small group sessions for discussions, and reporting sessions. There were 10 small groups or teams each with 13 to 15 participants. Individuals were assigned to these teams in an attempt to reflect the diversity of the total group in each of the small groups. The management consultants provided the facilitators for each of the teams. Department staff members were available as a resource for each team but were asked not to participate in the discussions other than to provide information as requested. Recorders sat with each team and at the plenary sessions to capture the discussion that took place.

The Minister came to the Budget Roundtable sessions. He had not participated in any of the Round One consultation sessions held earlier in the Fall. The Minister attended, listened and, at the end of the two day meetings, provided summary comments of the issues and the process. A written report summarizing the Budget Roundtable was prepared and distributed to the project mail list in late December 1993. The Budget Roundtable information was also incorporated into the computerized data base developed for the consultation process.

Participants commented that the Department appeared to have achieved its goal of inviting a diverse group of stakeholders and interested Albertans to the Budget Roundtable. Some individuals attending the consultations expressed surprise, however, at the large number and at the diversity of players involved in adult education in the province. Several institutional representatives commented that they spent a great deal of time at the Budget Roundtable trying to explain various aspects of the system to other participants in order to help them grasp the complexity of the system. Some participants did voice concerns about the process of reporting back to the plenary sessions. They claimed that the reports were narrow and one sided or did not always adequately reflect the discussion which had taken place in the small group sessions.

Department Business Plan

The responses to fiscal options presented at the Budget Roundtable both in the plenary reports and in the recorders notes from the group discussions were reviewed by Departmental staff members. These influenced the Department business plan which was still under development. Staff members from Advanced Education and Career Development were attempting to keep this first business plan somewhat general because the consultation and policy development processes were still underway. The Department's business plan was completed soon after the Budget Roundtable and submitted to the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning for review.

The Standing Policy Committee structure was introduced by the Klein government when the Premier established four Standing Policy Committees, each with a different role. The Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning was mandated to review long range policy directions and budgets for government departments including the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development. The Standing Policy Committee indicated that the Department's business plan was too vague and sent the Minister back to rework it. It was adjusted and resubmitted. The Standing Policy Committee approved the plan and it was forwarded to the Treasury Board for further scrutiny. Here it was turned back twice before being accepted. This work continued into January 1994, before the Department's business plan was accepted.

The Visioning Team Reports

In November 1993, the Visioning Team submitted their report to the Deputy Minister and the Department's Executive Committee. The Team had worked with consultants during the summer and fall months on an envisioning process and had developed a Department vision and the statement of values. The Team's vision was based on the year 2020, twenty five years into the future. For those who wanted a practical vision as a basis of planning for the next five years, this was considered somewhat futuristic. Nevertheless, the report of the Visioning Team was reviewed in mid-November, accepted and given over to a team of Department writers whose task it was to "tighten it up" so that it could be incorporated into Department documents which were part of the policy process. Proposals to the Executive Committee to allow the Team to conduct workshops with Departmental staff on the outcomes of the visioning process were not acted upon.

Policy Writing, January - March 1994

Throughout the early planning for the consultation, Departmental staff members spoke of developing a discussion paper to outline strategic options for the adult learning system. The plan called for this Strategic Options paper to be distributed to the public and then discussed through a series of regional consultation meetings in Round Two. By January 1994, the thrust of the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project activities shifted to the preparation and writing of that options paper, which was now being referred to in the Department as a Green Paper. This paper was to incorporate information from the Round One consultation, the Department's earlier strategic planning process, the budget roundtable process, other Departmental studies and various specific consultation activities.

In January 1994, two day-long retreats for the Department's senior executives focused on articulating issue statements and policy initiatives for the Green Paper. The White Paper Working Group was assigned the task of developing theme papers for the various issues. The process of writing, reviewing, revising and rewriting gradually integrated and shaped ideas into policy options. This integration, however, was long, intensive and filled with a great deal of discussion and debate.

The plan to prepare and distribute a Green Paper was now modified. Rather than send out a Green Paper for discussion and then prepare a White Paper, it was recommended to the Minister that the process be shortened through the preparation of a Draft White Paper. The Draft White Paper could become the discussion document for the Round Two consultations and then serve as the basis for the White Paper. The Draft document would include the vision, roles and goals broadly based on the input received through earlier events in this process. Strategies presented in the final White Paper needed to be consistent with the Department's three-year business plan.

In late February 1994, the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning reviewed the goals and strategies in Draft White Paper. The document was then further reviewed by Cabinet and Caucus before its release on March 30, 1994. Copies were sent to all those who had been involved in the consultation process to date, to those on the project mail list, and to those who would be invited to take part in the Round Two consultation meetings.

Planning Round Two Consultation

Meanwhile, the Operations Committee had moved ahead with planning for the Round Two consultation. One approach considered for this consultation phase was to hold several regional meetings and to link these via teleconference. By early February 1994, this plan was set aside in favour of a more traditional conference technology -- one of face-to-face meetings to enable more dialogue and negotiation of positions. It was decided that there would be only two meetings, one in Edmonton and the other in Calgary, possibly in mid-April 1994.

Each of these two consultation meetings would involve approximately 150 invited participants for 300 in total. The invitation list included the nearly 150 who had participated at the Budget Roundtable. The remaining 150 invitees were selected primarily from the list of previous participants in Round One regional consultation meetings. The total list was intended to provide a balance between "providers" and "recipients" in the adult learning system. The Minister emphasized the importance of inviting representatives of all postsecondary student associations. Additional invitations were extended to selected members of the business community. Some Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) were also invited including Opposition MLAs and some who were members of the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning, the committee of MLAs that would eventually receive and recommend on the approval of the White Paper. The invitation list for Round Two was developed to include a diverse base of individuals who would continue to be involved in the process of public consultation.

The Consultation Moderator

At the 1993 July Fiscal Planning Workshop the Minister indicated that he expected to announce soon a Moderator for the consultation process. The Minister had determined that there should be a "public face" for the consultation. The Chairman of the Board of a provincial corporation was confirmed in the Moderator's role in early September but the Minister did not make a public announcement at that time. The Moderator attended, as an observer, some of the Round One regional consultations in September-October, 1993, and was an invited participant for the Budget Roundtable sessions in November 1993. Meanwhile, the Moderator worked along with the Steering and Operations Committees in planning for Round Two consultation when he would act as Moderator. With the release of the Draft White Paper on March 30, 1994, the Minister also announced the Moderator. Invitations to participate in the Round Two consultation meetings were sent out under the Moderator's signature.

The Moderator's role evolved through discussions over the months. The role was finally determined as that of an independent, “unbiased” listener charged with the task of capturing what was coming from the meetings and providing that information back to the participants. The Moderator wanted to leave the participants with a sense of the discussions and areas of a consensus as well as disagreement.

Round Two Consultation, May 1994

Round Two consultations were conducted in Edmonton on May 2-3, 1994 and Calgary on May 5-6, 1994. The format planned for Round Two was generally similar to the Budget Roundtable. There were plenary sessions, small group meetings, preassigned groupings of participants. Small group discussions were conducted by facilitators. Unlike the Budget Roundtable, a Department staff member now participated at the discussion table in the small group sessions. Recorders took notes for each discussion group and for the plenary and reporting sessions. For Round Two a "comments’ wall" was also available to allow any participant to record ideas and reactions. The comments’ wall was to act as a tool to provide an alternative for participants to submit comments that may have been missed in the group reporting sessions or had not surfaced in the discussions.

The Moderator concluded the consultations in Edmonton and Calgary by providing oral and written summaries of what he had heard during the previous two days. These summaries became the basis of the third and final newsletter on this process. The newsletter included the Moderator's column of "What We Heard" in which he provided the feedback to Round Two participants and other individuals and groups on the project mail list who had an interest in this consultation process.

The Minister attended both the Edmonton and Calgary Round Two consultation meetings. He sat in on the discussion groups to hear what was being discussed. In his concluding remarks the Minister stated how valuable the process had been for the Department and indicated that further changes would yet be made to the proposed options and strategies in the development of the final White Paper.

By mid-May 1994, some 400 written submissions had been received in response to a request for comment on the Draft White Paper. A second Department staff consultation meeting was also held similar to the one in October 1993. All Round Two information, from consultation sessions and from written submissions, was again incorporated into the computerized data base.

Finalizing the White Paper, May - October 1994

Following a further analysis of the data, theme papers were developed and provided to the writing teams who then began drafting various components of the final White Paper. The White Paper would be the Government's policy position for the future of adult learning in Alberta. Writing, reviewing, debating, and revising were all part of the policy crafting process. As agreement came closer on parts of the paper, the Deputy Minister assigned one individual to act as an editor for the document so that it would convey a consistent tone and style. The Department had received criticism on the Draft White Paper that the document seemed somewhat disjointed and appeared to have been written by a committee -- which it had. The Deputy Minister continued to take an active role in the review and revision process throughout the development of the final document.

The Operations Committee concluded its activities in late June 1994. It held its last meeting and disbanded. An appreciation event was organized for Department staff members who had participated in the project, *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation,* in its many facets. A few stories were told and each staff member received an appreciation certificate.

Obtaining Government Approval

While the White Paper was being completed in the Department through the summer months of 1994, the Minister prepared for the multi-step approval process through which he had to take his document. The process required the Minister to take the White Paper for review and approval in turn to the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning, Cabinet, and then Caucus.

When the White Paper was complete, the Minister took several major items from the White Paper forward separately to the Standing Policy Committee. There he presented them for review, consideration and debate. As this was the Minister's White Paper, he was responsible for defending it before the Committee. After these items were approved for recommendation to Cabinet, the Minister then presented the full document of the White Paper to the Committee. It was approved without major modifications or change.

Once the Minister had obtained the approval of the Standing Policy Committee, he then forwarded the White Paper to Cabinet. After Cabinet approval, the White Paper was presented to Caucus. With this final approval step completed, the Minister was ready to release the White Paper.

Release of the White Paper, October 1994

On October 20, 1994, the Minister presented his White Paper, *New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta*, at a press conference and later tabled it in the Legislative Assembly. In his news release, the Minister stated that the White Paper offered a policy framework to meet the needs of adult Albertans. The paper set out 22 strategies to achieve four goals for the adult learning system: increased accessibility, responsiveness, affordability, and accountability. Five major initiatives were outlined in the paper: (a) the introduction of a Minister's Forum on Adult Learning, (b) the introduction of an applied degree at colleges and technical institutes, (c) the possible increase in tuition fees to 30% of a public institution's net operating expenditures, (d) improved mechanisms for students' to transfer courses between institutions, and (e) the revision of [institutional] collective agreements [for employment] to meet changing economic circumstances.

The White Paper seemed to contain few surprises for those who had been involved throughout the consultation and policy development process. Participants, internal and external, involved in the process agreed that some strategies in the final White Paper had been modified through the consultation process.

With the release of the White Paper, Department staff members turned to preparing legislation changes and implementing the strategies of the White Paper. Consultation was now to become part of the day-to-day operations of the Department.

CHAPTER 5

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESSES

This chapter presents the findings of the study but in a format quite different from that of the case story in the previous chapter. The data are displayed here in a manner that reflects the voices of the participants in the study and that allows them to present their own perspectives and understanding of activities and events related to the case study. The interview data are complemented by other data sources. The research questions are stated again and provide the framework for the remainder of the chapter. To assist with understanding the reference notations throughout the chapter, an explanation is provided of the system used to reference quotations with the master data files.

The data describing the structure of the policy development and consultation processes is presented chronologically within three time frames: *July 1992 to December 1992* which emphasizes the initial policy planning activities within Alberta Advanced Education; *January 1993 to December 1993* which focuses on the preparing for public consultation, informing the public on issues, gathering input on issues and options, and conducting the roundtable review of budget options; and *January 1994 to October 1994* which focuses on the preparing the Draft White Paper, consultation on the document, and writing the final White Paper. Three sets of events have been considered as "public" consultation for this study: the Round 1 Consultation, the Budget Roundtable, and the Round 2 Consultation.

Through the analysis of the data, four sets of issues were identified which emerged early during the planning process and which continued to be woven into ongoing discussions throughout the implementation of the consultation process. A discussion of these four process issues is presented. The consultation process affected the policy process in several ways. Six effects were noted from the data and subsequent analysis. The chapter concludes with a set of characteristics for the policy development process as developed from the perspectives of the study participants.

Research Questions

From the outset of this research study, the focus has been on gaining an understanding of the process of the development of the policy framework for the White Paper released by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in October 1994. During data collection, particular attention was paid to the contribution of public consultation to the process. This chapter presents the findings of the research study within the framework of the specific research questions which guided the study throughout:

1. *How was policy development structured for this process?*
2. *How was public consultation structured for this process?*
3. *What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?*
4. *In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?*
5. *What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?*

Referencing the Data

In presenting the findings, specific quotations have been drawn from the data collected for the study. Reference notations to quotations from the interviews, from my document notes, or from observations and field notes are supported with sources which assist in locating the item within the original data.

Interviews

A substantial amount of data for this study was generated through interviews conducted with individuals who were involved in planning or participating in some aspect of the processes under study. Twenty-five interviews were conducted with 21 individuals. When interview data are quoted, an alphanumeric note in brackets will follow each reference. An interview numbering system was established for data management at the beginning of the data collection for the study. For example, the reference IN05: 10-16 indicates the quotation was taken from interview number 5 and may be found in lines 10 to

16 of the master transcript.

Some quotations have been referenced in a different manner in which a one-time alpha designation is substituted for the numeric designation of the interview numbering system, such as IN0A: 19-23. This approach has been used to better preserve the anonymity of the interviewee across quotations. A list was recorded and maintained in a computer file of those alpha designators and the corresponding numeric interview reference sources. The line numbering continues to refer to the original interview transcript.

This latter referencing technique is based on my own personal experience of being interviewed for research studies. In reading the final document produced, often a thesis, I have readily identified my own comments and quotations and, without effort or intent, have frequently identified those of some of my colleagues. If, for example, the notation system is such that references to interview 01 are consistent throughout a document, and if, through reading, I have been able to identify interviewee 01 through a particular quotation at some point in the document, then the anonymity of the quotations is substantially weakened as I read through the remainder of the document. Due to the nature of this case study, the provincial profile of many of the Department and community members who participated in this study, and the familiarity of most of the participants of this process with each other, this referencing technique may assist with honouring the anonymity of the interviewees.

Another computer file was created into which each of the interview quotes included within the text of this document were copied by an electronic cut and paste method. The quotations were grouped by transcript source to provide a profile of the quotations incorporated. These were reviewed at the final draft stage of preparing the dissertation. Through this review I determined if any further adjustments were required in the numeric and alpha notation system to address the anonymity of respondents. As a result of this review, some adjustments have been made by shifting interview numeric notations to alpha notations.

A “reader”, who was familiar with my study and with many of the individuals who were involved as planners and participants in various aspects of the processes of this case, was given a printout of the interview quotations used in this document, was asked to review the quotations, and was asked to provide comment as to whether or not the sources of the quotations from the interviewees remained anonymous or tended to be identifiable in nature. This feedback was then used to determine if further adjustments were required in the alpha notations.

Documents, Observations, Field Notes

Meeting notes and discussion papers were prepared by Department staff members to document portions of the strategic planning and the consultation processes. While I did not attend these meetings, I was provided with access to meeting notes from the Divisional Task Force and the Operations Committee. A review of these records contributed to the development of a time line or chronology for this case study, the identification of the actors involved, and an indication of issues raised. These records also provided data which complemented the perceptions of the process provided by interviewees. When these records are referenced, the original date of the record is noted as listed in my document notes and is provided in brackets. For example, the source DN04/28/93 references the minutes/ notes of a meeting held April 28, 1993. References or quotations from public documents are noted in the bibliographic manner accepted for this dissertation.

Any specific references that may be sourced to my observation notes will be identified as ON followed by the month, day and year of the observation. References to data in field notes will be identified as FN followed by the month, day and year indicating when the notation was recorded.

Research Questions #1 and #2:
How was policy development structured for this process?
How was public consultation structured for this process?

Essentially the overview of the process for the development of the White Paper and the manner in which the process was structured has been presented in the case story in the previous chapter. There are, however, some aspects of the process that merit further presentation and analysis.

The Department records of the consultation planning process which I reviewed focus primarily on Round 1 and 2 consultations. Until Fall 1993, the Budget Roundtable was not acknowledged as a part of the public consultation process. However, for the purposes of this research study, I have identified three events or sets of events as representing the public consultation activities within this case story. These events are the following:

- *Round 1 Consultation* forums held in September and October 1993;
- *Budget Roundtable* held in November 1993; and
- *Round 2 Consultation* sessions held in May 1994.

The presentation of findings for this study also includes a focus on the earlier work of the Divisional Task Force in Alberta Advanced Education which contributed to the identification of strategic issues and supported some of the initial stakeholder consultation activities.

The case story has illustrated that the activities contributing to the process were somewhat overlapping in nature. When analyzing the structure of this process, three blocks of time emerged from the two and half year period. The data will be presented within these time blocks. These were:

- *July 1992 - December 1992:* with a focus on the initial strategic planning activities coordinated by the Divisional Task Force

- *January 1993 - December 1993:* with a focus on preparation for the public consultation, informing the public on issues, gathering input on issues and options, conducting the roundtable review of budget options, and

- *January 1994 - October 1994:* with a focus on the preparation of the Draft White Paper, consultation on the document, and writing of the final White Paper.

Initial Planning

There were many factors in the larger environment that were affecting the post secondary system and creating pressure for change in the early 1990s. The context for this Departmental planning initiative came from more than just the pressures of fiscal restraint. One Department member highlighted the pressures faced by the advanced education system in 1992 in this way:

> [We] saw an environment of continued fiscal restraint but also saw what we now call an adult learning system that was under a lot of pressures to change [from] demographics, technology, the economy, and globalization. All of those things. And we did some talking within the Department of Advanced Education about those forces, albeit within an environment of fiscal change. (IN0A: 19-23)

The Work of the Divisional Task Force

The Department created the Divisional Task Force in July 1992, to provide a direction for the planning activities. One Department member commented on the work of the Divisional Task Force and the contribution it made to the planning process:

> A divisional task group in fact preceded the whole public consultation. And that [task] group was trying to come to grips with essentially what the direction should be for this Division within the context of all the other things we knew that were going on. And [in retrospect] it seems to me to be a very important prelude to the big consultation process. [The Divisional Task Force] led us to a lot of issues, distilled a lot of problem areas and these became very important when the big process kicked in. (IN05; 11- 6)

There had been policy work underway in the Department on an ongoing basis but no comprehensive initiative had been undertaken during the previous two decade period. The Divisional Task Force now utilized a number of strategies in laying the groundwork for policy development.

> We realized that we needed a new policy framework for what we have come to call adult learning because there really hadn't been any work done in the area since the Worth Commission [in the early 1970s]. And before Premier Klein got elected, we were actively doing the work that one has to do to develop a policy. We had written some internal documents, we had some internal subcommittees, we had a so called "secret" group, and

> eventually what we were trying to do in all of that was to gather a data base, to identify issues, and to do some preliminary thinking about what might come out of all this process, to identify some options. (IN14: 7-14)

The Divisional Task Force had begun the process of strategic planning and initially the goal of the Divisional Task Force was to produce a policy discussion paper for presentation to the Minister by February 1993. The Task Force had adjusted that time line as circumstances changed in Fall, 1992. The Task Force members were informed at the beginning that the planning process needed input from stakeholders. In their meetings questions were raised as to how and when to include the stakeholders to create an understanding of the issues. The assumption was that, by involving stakeholders and receiving their feedback, the Department would have informed strategy options (DN07/07/92).

Once the work of the Divisional Task Force was underway, the group met nearly weekly for the next six months. The Task Force was cautioned not to get bogged down with defining a vision; their task was to develop "practical" visions (DN07/07/92). A level of uncertainty about where the Task Force was headed was acknowledged in the meeting notes (DN07/16/92). This lack of a vision and direction for their work made the task of planning more challenging. One member had a very distinct recollection of the experience of participating on the Task Force.

> That Divisional planning group . . . was perhaps one of the most frustrating experiences any of us had ever gone through because it was not disciplined. . . . went into it looking for ideas that we could translate into action; it was like the shopping list, brainstorming thing.
>
> The people on the committee got very frustrated with that approach because there was no context for it . . . we can't do this without a vision. We can't do this without a sense of where we are going. But we continued to persist . . . creating things and lots of background information but not translating it. Some wonderful things got produced . . . but because we had no framework to use it in, it just became reading and added to the binder. (IN12: 550-563)

That reaction was shared by another on the committee:

> It was a frustrating exercise . . . because [some] tended to take the view

> that we don't have to spend a lot of time going through a visioning process. All I can say is that we were just wrong. I certainly would admit that for myself. What became very clear to me, in retrospect, but which I had a great deal of difficulty dealing with during this initial exercise, was that you cannot ignore the fundamentals . . . and the wrangling about the process and about the visions of the future of post secondary education were just endless . . . I think that the Department got its feet wet and then turned around and had to do everything all over again. (IN0B: 36-59)

The respondent later returned in conversation to reflect on the lack of a visioning process in the work of the Divisional Task Force and the limitations that imposed.

> I think that we [the Divisional Task Force] didn't do a very good job, and perhaps couldn't have done . . . of the visioning part of the exercise. . . . One lesson that I have learned from that very frustrating early exercise was that [the visioning] is necessary because a lot of people find it very important.
>
> I recognize the need to have a sense of where you are heading but for me it is an evolving kind of thing. The idea of developing a vision seems difficult to do and limiting in some ways. But I know that not everybody sees it that way . . . it was clearly one of the real difficulties--one of the fundamental mistakes--that we made in the early stages.
>
> For another strategic planning process, I would absolutely include work in that area . . . You've got to do some of this, even if you don't succeed. If you don't [do it], people keep on harkening back to it. You can't get into the more mundane aspects of strategic planning unless you at least try it. And the fact that we didn't try it in the first exercise with the [Divisional Task Force]--well, any ways it was a partial failure. (IN0B: 480-532)

The Task Force had initially outlined two processes. One was an internal strategic planning process. The second was the consultation process, which was seen by the Task Force, as a sub-component of the internal process. The strategic planning process was to encompass broad policy and direction setting, internal and external environment assessments, attention to key stakeholders, identification of key issues, development of strategies to deal with each issue, recommendation, action and a process to continue to monitor results. The consultation process was to identify the key stakeholders, to decide who should be involved or just informed, to identify the mechanisms for consultation, and to develop the desired consultation strategies and actions (DN07/09/92).

The Think Tank Strategy: Ideas Committee

The Task Force incorporated a variety of strategies during its few months of activity in 1992. One strategy was the establishment of an independent think tank to focus on options for the post secondary education system. This "ideas" committee, as it was frequently referred to, prepared a report, *For All Our Futures* (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1992) which presented options and alternatives for the system. As the Department chose not to make the names of the members of the committee public, the media dubbed the group as the "secret" committee which added some profile to their work.

One Department member commented on the think tank strategy as a useful one for this planning process.

> I think that [the ideas committee] was important in a couple of respects. In the first place, they got their act together very quickly. And they produced the product that [the Divisional Task Force] were not capable of producing (IN15: 90-95) . . . [The ideas committee] just took the analysis of issues that we [the Department] had prepared, or that we had commissioned in those reports, and they just brainstormed. What they did for us was explore, in some fairly extreme forms, the possibilities . . . So they came up with major integrated strategies and we didn't . . . They didn't accomplish what I think [the Task Force] ended up accomplishing and that was engaging a significant part of the Department. (IN15: 109-138)

This view of the contribution of the ideas committee was support by another Department member.

> We were bringing [the ideas committee] in to stretch our minds, to give us new ideas. We felt that we had been in the trenches for a long time and we needed a way to pop our heads up and take a look at the world in a fresh way. And we thought knowledgeable people outside the department could do that for us. . . . The fact that we didn't make the names public rode on us for a long time.
>
> [That committee] did two things for us. They brought a framework way of thinking about things . . . It helped us frame our thinking . . . And the other benefit was just getting to know some . . . people in the system that we could talk to on this or that. It has been useful to have a nice little network of people who have a sense of where we have been and where we are trying to go to. (IN28: 129-160)

> Their report became one more input to the process, just like the results of the budget workshop and the results of the Budget Roundtable and the results of the regulatory review. (IN28: 166-168)

The Consultation Strategy: Key Stakeholders

Much of the activity of the Task Force was directed toward the identification of strategic issues and options. However, the meeting notes of the Task Force did indicate that the process of developing the policy paper would need input from the stakeholders (DN07/07/92). During Fall, 1992, the Deputy Minister and Department staff members implemented a consultation strategy with key stakeholders when they set up a series of presentations and meetings with senior staff members in the public institutions around the province. These meetings had come to be referred to within the Department as the "dog and pony" show.

> The Deputy Minister went out to all the institutions with a "dog and pony" show. She really did a good job of telling it like it is . . . There were very serious problems, and very well documented . . . I hadn't realized that what I was watching was really the beginning of the process. And it was basically the issue identification . . . That was really where [the process] began. (INAI: 54-86)

These meetings helped to lay the ground work and the context for later consultation activities.

> We had a "dog and pony" show and there were basically two messages. One was the fiscal one and the second was about issues affecting the post secondary system . . . We asked the system to give us input on what they saw as issues affecting post secondary education (IN0C: 178-198) . . . Recently some people who were in that audience way back in '92 said "You know that presentation was one of the best things that happened because it helped me personally understand what has happened to us in the past two or three years" . . . At the time we [in the Department] really didn't think of it but there have just been too many people who remembered it and said something about how it gave them a context for everything that has happened. (IN0C: 183-214)

To this point the consultation activities undertaken had focused only on key stakeholders and centred primarily on presentations, meetings, and requesting input on issues affecting the system.

> We spent six months talking to institutions asking them to give us suggestions for new ways of doing things, improvements to the system . . . At that point we were only going to institutions. We hadn't broadened out the perspective. (IN10: 12-29)

Department staff members were aware that the strategic options policy discussion document that they were to prepare would provide the basis of a major public discussion to occur during 1993. They discussed the fact that the consultation process would need to extend beyond the board governed institutions (DN 07/22-23 /92).

> There had been discussions within the old Advanced Education Department from the late 80s that we needed a new policy discussion on post secondary education . . . but I don't think that the public had thought two minutes about post secondary education . . . [we] felt all the more that somehow we had to bring more than just a few institutional people into the circle to help them understand the issues facing us and the need for change (IN0D: 253-262)
>
> We needed the public on side . . . [and] didn't think that we could change institutions if we just talked to institutions. (IN0D: 473-474)

Department members reflected on the value of broadening the involvement of stakeholders through a consultation process in order to develop a sense of ownership of the change through the process.

> If you are going to bring about real change--and that is what we are talking about these days, not just because of budget changes, other changes--if you are going to bring about real change, you really have to involve the people who are going to be part of the change or affected by the change so that they take ownership of the change. (IN14: 28-33)

Department staff members were beginning to expand their understanding of the consultation process. Some staff members were now directed to learn more about the process of public consultation in preparation for a broader based public discussion on the future of the post secondary system.

The Divisional Task Force Preliminary Report

In spite of the challenges and frustrations experienced, the Strategic Options Task

Force (the specific name given to the Divisional Task Force) concluded its work with the submission of an internal report to the Deputy Minister in December 1992. The preface of the report, the *Preliminary Report on the Issues* (DN12/23/92), reiterated the context for this planning initiative:

> In September 1992, the Minister announced a plan to conduct a wide-ranging public debate in 1993 on the issues and strategic options confronting the post secondary system in Alberta. This discussion had its roots in the growing urgency for new directions in post secondary education given rapidly changing economic and social needs, the increasing demand for access, and the request, as stated in the budget speech, that all departments consult with their stakeholders on the implications of achieving the government's objective of restoring fiscal balance. (DN12/23/92)

The Report outlined the two lines of activity that had been undertaken to prepare for these later public discussions:

> The striking of an internal departmental task force to develop an integrated view of strategic issues and options for presentation to the Deputy Minister and the implementation of a process of consultation with the institutions, faculty and students to obtain their views on issues and options. This process will include presentation of an overview of the provincial fiscal situation, distribution of background papers, the invitation to submit formal briefs and the striking of a small, informal "ideas" group drawn from institutions and the private sector. (DN12/23/92)

The content of the Task Force Report focused mainly on the issues facing the system and offered a range of strategic options clustered around four system goals identified in the document. While various options were offered, the Report provided the disclaimer that the options "have not yet been extensively evaluated nor have implementation issues been considered" (DN12/23/92).

At the outset, the Divisional Task Force was assembled to prepare a policy discussion paper for the Minister which would outline strategic options for the system. The Task Force Report delivered in December 1992, presented not a policy discussion document but a description of the characteristics of the current system, of strategic issues facing the system, and posted a list of possible options for future consideration. One Task

Force member commented on that outcome:

> The Departmental [Task Force] committee did not finally produce what it was supposed to produce. It spent some useful time in trying to talk about the major strategic issues and, if you look at the report, you would see surfacing there some of the things that appeared in the [later] public documents. But [the Task Force] didn't complete . . . identifying the major trends and issues that are affecting us, what are the strategic options. We ended up with a shopping list of unrelated strategic options. (IN15: 96-108)

Changes in Political Context and Department Amalgamation

As reported earlier, in December 1992, the Progressive Conservative party in Alberta elected a new leader and Premier. A new and smaller Cabinet was introduced. The Departments of Advanced Education and of Career Development and Employment were amalgamated under a new Minister. The amalgamation imposed additional challenges on the new Department and their planning processes. One interviewee offered these comments:

> Those first few months were incredible. The learning curve was incredibly steep. There was a lot to learn about the Department but it had also been amalgamated . . . [The Minister] couldn't just fit the same role as the previous Minister because we knew from the Premier that the direction of this portfolio was to have a different shape to it.
>
> The strategic planning that was taking place in Advanced Education was separate from the Minister's Consultative Committee on Labour Market [in Career Development and Employment]. So same government, different Ministers, and the Department in those early months was not woven yet--there were still separate structures, separate Deputies reporting to one Minister . . . The nature of the Department changed. We not only had to deal with the fact that the Department was changing but we also had to deal with the fact that the government had essentially changed. Significantly changed and was heading into an election. (IN13: 43-71)

During this period the focus of attention within the Department shifted to matters of amalgamation and the emphasis on the strategic planning process was reduced somewhat.

> [Klein] was elected in early December 1992 as leader of the party and produced a Cabinet which amalgamated all sorts of Departments including

> ours. And there were things continuing on in the strategic planning process but essentially we were coming to grips with the fact that the scope of operations here had suddenly broadened by the amalgamation . . . And for two months we had two Deputy Ministers . . . so I think that we were more concerned with how do we amalgamate than we were about strategic planning . . . it was such a confused period but we basically continued to worry away at the strategic issues. (IN15: 22-36)

By late February, the Deputy Minister from Advanced Education had been named as the new Deputy Minister for the amalgamated Department. The strategic planning and consultation planning proceeded now for Advanced Education and Career Development (hereafter referred to as the Department) but with a scope that had broadened considerably.

Public Consultation and Roundtables

Planning for Public Consultation

The concept of consultation, as it was understood within the frame of the Divisional Task Force, was a process that was narrowly defined and limited mostly to the involvement of key stakeholders. This perception was confirmed by a Department member:

> In the early stages we imagined that consultation simply meant talking to our partners. Not many folks wanted to stray far outside that. [We] never imagined that we wanted to pull off anything much bigger. And then things started to happen. Consultation started to become the rage, the buzz word. (IN12: 492-495)

One Department member reflected on the earlier understanding of consultation in Advanced Education:

> We had always consulted but very narrowly . . . Our normal consultations before the amalgamation were with Boards, faculty associations, and student groups in the post secondary institutions. Private providers were talked to only if they were licensed as private vocational schools and they were only talked to by the Private Vocational Schools [branch]. There was a consultative process there but it was all very provider-oriented and with a specific client orientation.
>
> Involving the larger public was not a result of the government

> initiative. . . . [The Deputy Minister] had always seen the development of a strategic plan as something that would involve the larger public. It would be a public exercise and a public document would be produced. (IN20: 169-186)

To help prepare government staff members for more involvement in planning and implementing public consultation, the central personnel office of government offered training courses on public consultation.

> [Two Department members] were sent on a course a "how to do public consultation" course for government workers in town . . . came back from that and presented to the department an outline for public consultation--how would you do it. The way [the course leader] cast the whole notion, [the staff] came back with a much broader idea of what consultation should be . . . what we became aware of is that public consultation in a theoretical sense meant that you talk to more people than just your immediate family. And as we spent more time talking about [this concept of consultation], we became more and more comfortable with it. (IN0E: 492-513)

By March 1993, the Department had moved forward in their planning for a public consultation process. But this was not without some start up pains.

> My recollection is that not long after the Deputy Minister was named that we started thrashing out the consultation process--the beginnings of it. And we had meetings with some conflict--you know, what it would look like. (IN0F: 32-34)

The planning now underway was based on a somewhat expanded understanding of public consultation. There were still, however, many Department members who were skeptical about the role of public consultation in this policy process and the contribution that it would make to the outcome. To facilitate planning for the process an Assistant Deputy Minister was assigned responsibility for the consultation and a project coordinator was appointed for the public consultation. The Department members had recognized that expertise on the public consultation process was lacking in the Department.

> We just didn't have the knowledge to run an effective consultation. We needed to bring some expertise into the Department to assist us to run an effective consultation . . . We just didn't have the technical ability to do that . . . We used a firm . . . very knowledgeable on field consultations so they were able to give us nudges in the right direction when we were going

> from here to there. (IN02: 164-171)

This lack of a knowledge of the public consultation process within the Department was mentioned by another Department member. "We had done our homework and knew what some of the issues were but we did not have any expertise in public consultation (IN10: 54-55)."

External consultants were hired to provide advice on the planning and conducting of the public consultation. A formal organizational structure with several committees was created for the *Consultation on Adult Learning* as it was called at that point (DN04/26/93). The focus of this public consultation had, due to the Department amalgamation, now broadened beyond post secondary education and included the full range of adult learning initiatives encompassed within the scope of the new Department.

On May 7, 1993, the Minister announced that the theme of a public consultation process to be undertaken by the Department would be *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation*. The purpose of this public consultation was to set a new direction for the future of adult education in the province and to design an innovative plan to get there (DN05/07/93).

Organizing for Consultation Planning

Committee Structure

An Operations Committee was formed and this committee developed the terms of reference for each of a Steering Committee, an Operations Committee and a Project Secretariat established for the project. These terms of reference were approved in June 1993 (Appendix C). The purpose of the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project was stated in those Terms of Reference as follows:

> In support of its commitment to promote a lifelong learning society in Alberta, the Government through a process of public consultation and strategic planning will inform Albertans by Spring 1994, of the policies, principles, and strategic plans that will guide the development of adult learning into the 21st century. (DN06/09/93)

Through this structure, the Steering Committee would provide leadership and direction in formulating a policy framework and strategic plan for the development of a system of adult learning in Alberta. The Operations Committee, guided by the policy directions of the Steering Committee, would be responsible for determining, managing, and implementing the activities necessary for the development and production of a policy framework and strategic plan for the system of adult learning in Alberta. The Project Secretariat would provide research, analytical, and advisory support to both the Steering and Operations Committees throughout the public consultation and the strategic planning processes.

The project was now clearly committed to developing recommendations for a policy framework and strategic plan as the final outcome in Spring, 1994 (DN06/09/93). An organizational chart for the project was prepared to clarify the relationship between the various committees (Appendix D).

The Operations Committee took on the role of planning and "actually making the consultative process happen (IN02: 7)." This was really "the technical group that plotted the mechanics of doing [the consultation], the huge range of issues that had to be confronted, how you would do it, the balance and all that (IN05: 6-8)."

The membership of the Operations Committee came from across the new Department:

> It was an attempt to try to make sure that there was enough Department representation that when the [Operations] Committee took its findings and recommendations to the next level up, which was the Steering Committee and then to Corporate [Management], that the Operations Committee had some credibility and some weight. (IN03: 56-60)

Statement of Objectives for the Consultation

A Statement of Objectives for *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* was drafted and put forward to the Steering Committee for review. This Statement outlined the objectives, outcomes, and components of the process. The Statement continued through a series of revisions and updates from May until September (DN09/17/93, Appendix E). Additional Objectives for Round 2 Consultation were drafted in November and added later.

This Statement of Objectives became a guide for the project and these were referred to regularly. However, these objectives were a long while in development and reflected the evolution of the project. As there was no previously established format in place for this consultation, the overall process evolved as the planning was underway.

> The interesting thing about the process is that we did not have the luxury of having put together a think-piece on the policy underpinnings for the consultation in advance of involving the consultants. We did the consultation and we worked out why and how we were doing it all at the same time, with lots of cross overs. I think that ideally if we had done our homework first and figured out a way of clearly [knowing] why we were doing this and what our objectives and outcomes were, we would have saved quite a lot of time. It worked out OK in the end but we kept flipping back and forth between what we were doing and why we were doing it. (IN0G: 82-89)

The Statement of Objectives (DN09/17/93) identified the components of the consultation process. Round 1 would be a series of regional consultation meetings held in Fall, 1993, and would provide an opportunity for the Department to inform the public of critical trends and issues, to affirm a common mission for adult learning, and to identify strategic options for achieving the mission. The proposed format for Round 2 tended to shift over time from considerations of regional workshops to roundtable consultations, however, Round 2 continued to maintain the focus to examine and react to a discussion document containing strategic directions and options gathered from the suggestions of participants in Round 1, from written submissions, and from other relevant documents. In September 1993, the Budget Roundtable was not yet included in the Objectives as a component of this public consultation process.

Throughout the process, the meeting notes show a repeated adjustment of the time lines and dates. Some dates were adjusted based on the scope of the activity encountered and some adjustments were linked with events in the political context such as the calling of the provincial election.

Developing a Stakeholder Database

The development of a stakeholder database was an important aspect of the planning for the consultation. A discussion paper was prepared to address the issue of who was being consulted. The paper offered a definition of the term "stakeholder" and provided a preliminary list of those who might be affected by or who may be interested in the consultation. The definition of a stakeholder used for the consultation was the following:

> The publics/ stakeholders in this consultation will be those individuals, groups or organizations who perceive themselves to be directly or indirectly affected or negatively impacted by, who are interested in, or in some way have a stake in the outcome of the consultation. (DN05/18/93)

Names of stakeholders were contributed by all branches of the Department, and as additional individuals and organizations were identified, those names were also added to the database throughout the project.

> We were very very thorough in putting together headings and lists and finding out who they [organizations] were. The consultant was helpful. We merged every list we had--everybody we had ever touched and anybody that we could think of that we should touch and bring in. It was very very broad based. (IN10: 253-256)

Round 1 consultation comprised a series of 13 public meetings and four outreach sessions held at various locations throughout the province. The sessions were advertised by a print and radio advertising campaign as well as through direct mail to stakeholders and others in the database. The participation in Round 1 was open to all interested.

Round One Consultation

Consultation Documents for Round 1

By early September 1993, the consultation documents had been prepared for Round 1 of the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project. Two documents: *Profile and Trends* (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993a, September) and *Issues and Questions* (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993a, September) were distributed to the database of stakeholders and to any other interested individual for consideration and review. The *Issues and Questions* document concluded with the following summary and invitation:

> Do the four broad issues discussed in this paper--accessibility, affordability, responsiveness and accountability--cover the main challenges facing adult learning in Alberta? What other issues need to be addressed? In your opinion, what is the most important action that could be taken to improve adult learning opportunities in Alberta? In your opinion, what works in our current adult learning system? What needs to be changed? What should we discard? What should be introduced?
>
> As we stated at the outset of this document, adult learning in Alberta is at a crossroads. The challenges--what and how services will be provided in this area--cannot be ignored.
>
> We invite you to take the time to participate in this process. Please consider the questions posed in this document then attend one of the upcoming regional meeting or send your comments to *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* . . .
>
> Your opinions are greatly appreciated. They are a key component in successfully developing a new direction for adult learning in Alberta. (p. 11)

Format for Round 1 Sessions

Plans had evolved over time and by September 1993, the Steering and Operations Committees agreed to a format for the Round 1 consultation public forum sessions. The sessions were to begin with an overview of the process provided by a member of one of the Department consultation teams. This would be followed by the presentation of ideas by participants, then question and answer sessions between the consultation panel and presenters, and a discussion at the conclusion of the presentations (DN09/17/93). Details for the sessions had received considerable discussion at the meetings of the Operations Committee. Some concern was raised with the Committee as to whether there would be sufficient interaction among the participants (DN08/17/93). Anyone from the public could attend the sessions. However, individuals wishing to make a presentation were asked to contact the Department and be scheduled with a date and time. A facilitator provided though the consultation consulting firm was responsible for chairing and conducting the session. A team of recorders from the Department was assigned to each forum to capture the key ideas presented.

Public Response to Round 1

Community members responded to the invitation to participate in the consultation and showed up at sessions across the province. Members of Further Education Councils and community-based adult education organizations were particularly strong in their attendance. One attendee offered the following comments on the opportunity that the consultation provided while still acknowledging some notion of skepticism concerning the process:

> We . . . chose to get involved because it was a good opportunity to have our voice heard--there was a lot of skepticism as to whether or not it would make a difference . . . whether or not [the Department or government] would listen or if decisions had already been made. But when you have an opportunity like that to speak directly to [the Department officials], it is folly not to take advantage of it. And because it was going to directly impact us and our community in a big way it was really important that we participate in some measure. But the time line [for preparation] was just crushing. (IN19: 7-57)

Other community members also commented that the time lines from receiving materials to delivering the presentation were very short. They felt that created a lot of pressure to respond effectively. One described the frustration and the dilemma.

> While I was frustrated with the time line and felt that it was not a good expression of [the Department's] degree of serious commitment to the project, nonetheless, my past experience told me that this is not atypical of government. Government clearly wanted its own agenda and if you want to participate, you march to their time lines. If we don't take advantage of [participating], the only loss is ours. So while we may not like it and may feel like we are having to drop everything else, I don't think that we have any alternative. (IN01: 229-237)

The students' associations took advantage of the opportunity of the consultation to present their message to the Department. "We had somebody in each institution [throughout the province]. [The students' association] had a meeting before hand and had a game plan in place (IN24: 119-120)." Student participation across the province was coordinated so that students would attend and make a presentation at the consultation meetings in their region. The students had prepared a position paper earlier in the year at the invitation of the Deputy Minister. Now they had written another submission and took the opportunity to attend many of the sessions and to engage in a discussion on the issues from the students' point of view.

In some communities the turn out for the consultation sessions was very low as was described by the comments from this institutional representative:

> In the Fall [1993] there were the open forums. One was in [our community]. I went for the whole day. I made a presentation . . . as president of [our] College. I was invited to stay to address questions and issues on the college, etc. The room was a reasonable size and there were only 10 people there. There was no interest in this. (IN25: 41-45)

Department staff members had anticipated some of the concerns that the consultation process might raise in the community. One Department member summarized the situation in these words:

> [The Round 1 consultation process] was something that we went into with our eyes wide open . . . people were basically being consulted to death and we had all these consultations [in the province] which were happening at the same time. It was difficult to get [public] attention. . . . . In spite of getting off to a rocky start--we had trouble getting the information packages out to people so they had them in adequate time before the meetings started. And we had to do some damage control with respect to saying to people "you've got time to respond to this in writing". And we tried to get it out as soon as we could. But the people who were really affected were the people who came to the early public meetings at the end of September. By the time we got to the third week [in October] it wasn't an issue any more--but it was in the beginning. (IN03: 253-265)

Observation Notes From Round 1

Notes were documented of my observations for the Round 1 sessions which I attended: two sessions in Red Deer and two sessions in Edmonton. In each location, I observed one afternoon and one evening session. Initial notes were made during the sessions. These were then supplemented with observations which were tape recorded immediately after leaving the sessions and were later incorporated as the observation notes were written up.

Red Deer consultation sessions. The following descriptions are based on my observation notes from the Red Deer sessions which I attended.

> The Red Deer consultation sessions were conducted during the first of a three week period for the consultation meetings. I attended the sessions and observed on September 28, 1993. There were 24 and 13 public participants attending the afternoon and evening sessions respectively. The consultation team members participated in the sessions in addition to the public. For the afternoon Red Deer session there were eight team members whom I identified and for the evening session 10 members from the team. In Red Deer, the sessions were held in a hotel meeting room which was quite large. Moveable dividers were positioned to block off a portion of the room thus creating a visual impression to reduce the size of the room.
>
> The working area was organized in the half of the room closest to the entrance. Rectangular tables covered with table cloths were arranged in a large open square formation. Additional seating for observers was provided and was set back one row from the table on two sides. However, due to the numbers attending, all presenters, observers, and consultation panel members were invited to sit at the table. The panel members were in various locations around the table. No microphones were used as the numbers attending were small enough and the room set up made it possible for all to hear the presentations and comments. There was a registration table at the entrance door and those attending the session were asked to sign a list indicating name, organization, and address. In the room and to one side and in the corner, a table was set up with coffee, tea and cups. Charts were posted on the wall and on a flip chart to outline the components of the consultation process and the trends which were highlighted in the consultation documents.
>
> At both sessions, the facilitator introduced a member of the consultation team who provided an overview of the consultation process. Both the consultation team member who provided the introductory remarks and the facilitator stressed the informality which they wished to introduce to the sessions. This was followed by an opportunity for introductions all around for presenters, other attendees, members of the consultation panel and recorders. Each presentation was kept to 10 minutes or less. Recorders sat sometimes at the table and sometimes away from the table depending on the mode of recording. Manual notes were recorded at the table. Computerized notes recorded on computer notebooks were sometimes recorded away from the table. Breaks were built into the schedule for both the afternoon and evening. During the breaks, those attending engaged actively in conversation.
>
> The afternoon session began at 1:30 p.m. and the three scheduled

> presentations were concluded prior to the break at 2:45 p.m.. When the session reconvened at 3:10 p.m., a general question and answer and discussion was held until the session was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.. Many public participants and the team members who were seated at the table took part in the discussion. The evening session began at 7:30 p.m.. Two presentations were scheduled for the evening. A question and answer and general discussion was conducted from 8:10 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. with the opportunity for a break in mid-evening. (ON09/28/93)

In an informal discussion with one of the consultation team members two days following the Red Deer sessions, I was told that a total of 81 public participants attended the four sessions in Red Deer on September 28 and 29, 1993, and another 30 attended the outreach session held in Stettler on the morning of September 29. In total 25 verbal presentations were received by the consultation team at the five sessions. This team member indicated to me that each session was different and that adjustments to the process were required to accommodate the needs of the groups each time (FN10/01/93).

Edmonton consultation sessions. My observation notes for the Edmonton sessions were written during and following the afternoon and evening sessions on October 5, 1993. The Edmonton sessions were scheduled during the second week of the consultation meetings. The following observations and comments are taken from those notes of the Edmonton sessions.

> I attended the Edmonton Round 1 consultation sessions on October 5, 1993, which were held in a large meeting hall in the Edmonton Convention Centre. There were Department staff members acting as greeters and welcoming people into the hall. A registration table was placed at the door where people were asked to sign in to track attendance.
>
> From my position while standing at the doorway to the hall, I observed the room arrangement. The chairs were arranged facing forward from the door toward the far wall that served as the front of the room. The hall was set up in a formal theatre style of seating. Chairs were arranged in three banks, with outside aisles and two centre aisles. There were nine rows of chairs with 16 chairs in most rows, thus providing seating in the convention hall for approximately 150 attendees.
>
> Looking toward the front of the room, a table was located near the left front corner to seat the three team members who were recorders for

the sessions. Across the front of the room, a raised dias held a speaker's podium with a microphone and as well as a long covered and skirted table at which the facilitator and four Department members were seated. Continuing to the right of the panel table and the dias, there was a flip chart and facing from the right corner of the room was a projection screen with an overhead projector near by. Coffee and refreshments were arranged on a table near the rear of the room.

There was a total of eight consultation team members who were involved as chair/ facilitator, recorders, or panel members for the afternoon session. Other Department members and consultants were also present and assisted with arrangements or appeared to be watching and listening to the proceedings. One member of the panel provided a brief overview of the consultation process. The facilitator then began to call upon the presenters, announcing in advance the individuals who would be speaking in each segment of the afternoon.

Presentations were mostly 8-10 minutes in length. The presentations were specifically scheduled and participants had been notified of the date and time of the presentation. Fourteen verbal presentations were heard during the afternoon. One break was called at 3:35 p.m..

At the break, I was in conversation with three of the presenters, two of whom had presented and one who was scheduled to present on the following day. A panel member came to our group to ask some questions and seek an opinion. The remainder of the afternoon did not include a question or discussion period.

Attendance throughout the afternoon was far more fluid than at Red Deer sessions where individuals had tended to stay for the entire period of time. Individuals here arrived in advance of their presentations and many left soon after it was delivered. My estimate was that attendance varied between a high of 75 and a low of 30 during the afternoon and that included some of the team members who were not part of the panel or recorder group. By 4:00 p.m. more than half of the earlier afternoon attendees had departed. One individual commented to me that several attendees seemed to be present to "look and learn". The session adjourned by 5:00 p.m..

The evening session began at 7:15 p.m.. The "peak" of evening attendance was 29, a number which included 12 university students who were observing the proceedings as an assignment for a graduate course. Ten presentations were heard during the evening.

> At 9:20 p.m. all presentations were completed. The facilitator suggested that the audience form into three groups to have a discussion for the next half hour. A recorder, a panel member and, in some cases, a consultant sat with each group. Following the discussions, the Deputy Minister provided concluding comments for the evening and the session adjourned at 10:00 p.m..
>
> Throughout the day there had been many one-on-one discussions taking place in the large room before, during and after presentations. Although there were no questions posed to most of the presenters, I did see panel members take the opportunity to have a conversation with presenters and others during breaks. (ON10/05/93)

Participant Perceptions of Round 1

Because this was a new process and experience, several presenters chose to attend and observe a session prior to making a presentation. They exercised one of two options: to attend at the same location at which they were to present, or if they were scheduled for the first day of the session to attend at another location prior to their presentation date. One presenter commented on this latter experience noting that in doing so, members of the observing group had shifted from observer to participant observer status during that particular session:

> Because we had never done this before, we went to [a smaller Alberta city] to sit in on some of the sessions. It turned out to be a very small session that we happened to attend. The facilitator was exceptionally good. There weren't a lot of submissions and they were short and we were allowed to comment and interact--and, of course, we did. That was wonderful. I really enjoyed that part of it because it gave us a better understanding of what the process was . . . to hear what other people were thinking, and look at the range of concerns out there. (IN0H: 15-22)

This participant offered a comparison of the experience of attending a session held in that smaller centre and presenting at one of the Edmonton sessions:

> The way it was organized in Edmonton was a tad more daunting. It was very formal as opposed to [the smaller city] which was [set up] in a square. [The smaller centre] was a lot more comfortable. You had a sense that it was easy to speak. Whereas in Edmonton, you were using the mike and walking to the mike--the whole process eliminated communication from the people in the audience--too many barriers for discussion. In [the smaller

> centre] a lot of things were happening over the break--it worked out really well. It might have been harder to do it very much differently in Edmonton but it set an entirely different tone. (IN0H: 38-44)

The comments on the Edmonton setting were echoed by another presenter when reflecting on personal experience:

> The time lines were really tight that day. With the panel up there [at the front], there wasn't an easy sense about that day. It felt cold. The Convention Centre is a cold place. The way the room was set up--I suppose it had to some degree to be set up that way--but there was a panel and a podium at the front and there was another panel taking notes at the side. I felt a lot of pressure that day. I was really pleased with the way that they organized the couple of breaks . . . I think not only did the panel need that but I think that the participants needed that sense of break to basically come up for air. (IN0J: 383-392)

Several students were scheduled to present during the evening on the first day of the Edmonton sessions. One student offered these comments and perceptions of the value of the impromptu discussion groups organized by the session facilitator following the formal presentations.

> I went to the [open forum] in Edmonton and presented our [position paper]--a bit of a soap box routine/ speech whatever. Interesting that they were allowing presentations both written and verbal, most people did both. Hard to give up the opportunity to speak whenever you can. And they had time at the end [of the evening session] so the consultant said they felt they should do something different so they broke into three groups. There was one [panel member] from government and one consultant in each group . . . no [meaningful] dialogue in our group--most people were just restating their positions and it gave the government a chance to put in their two cents I felt. (IN24: 103-116)

Department Member Perceptions of Round 1

One Department member spoke of the general format of the sessions for Round 1 and the intended outcomes for that design. Because of the attendance numbers and the interaction through discussion, the goal appeared to be more achievable at the sessions in the smaller centres.

> On the day [of the open forum session] anybody could speak who wanted

> to speak and we turned it over to an open dialogue . . . We wanted lots of breaks because we wanted the people who participated to inform each other. One of the reasons we had the consultation in the first place is that we wanted people to speak past their traditional ears. We wanted institutions to hear what students said to business, we wanted business to hear what institutions said to research professors, and we wanted them to hear what all these other issues are. We wanted [the participants] to ultimately knit this stuff together and to recognize the positions that other people were taking. (IN0M: 225-234)

A debriefing on the Round 1 meetings was held after each of the three weeks of consultations in September and October 1993. During the first two weeks, the consultation teams reported that many of the participants expressed concern with the timing of the sessions and that the lead time provided to the public for preparation was inadequate. It was reported that at the smaller centres, the sessions were quite interactive; in the larger cities, there were many presentations and not much discussion. Many participants in Round 1 indicated that they had heard about the consultation sessions through a Department contact. The consultation teams noted that they were hearing from people with whom the Department usually dealt. Some participants had voiced a concern about whether or not their ideas would be "heard." Consultation team members indicated that many presenters provided background information about their organizations rather than offering recommendations or solutions to the issues under discussion (DN10/ 05/93, DN10/08/93).

Consultation Teams and the Daily Debriefings

The consultation teams covered the thirteen open forums and four outreach sessions throughout the province during the three-week period. The senior Department staff members were members of these travelling teams and this was seen by some in the Department to be a valuable aspect to the consultation.

> Taking the senior executives out there and having them listening to people was an . . . important aspect of this whole thing. [The senior staff] heard voices that they had never heard before. Not only that but they heard consistent messages that they had never heard before--or if they had they had discounted them.

> We had debriefing sessions after each meeting and people travelled together in vans . . . You are sitting in the van or the debriefing session with [senior staff] and you are talking about the same things . . . you all experienced the same thing . . . all of a sudden it was OK to talk about new directions, it was OK to talk about change, it was OK to voice some new ideas . . . It really kind of unfroze the organization to do that . . . the executives were confirming for everybody else that this was a legitimate process. (IN0K: 552-568)

The daily debriefings became an important part of the process. The debriefings not only provided a chance to capture the key messages of the sessions but also provided an opportunity for the consultation team and recorders to screen out some of their biases or oversights in understanding the issues.

> [The Operations Committee] decided that recording was "listening and capturing the essence"--not taking minutes and not transcribing. We used people for recording who had some knowledge of the Department itself and some of the program areas, so they knew what they were listening for . . . that is sort of the good news and the bad news. They could screen out things that they didn't want to hear. We decided that was a chance that we could take and the debriefings caught any of that . . . we would capture the key messages and they would go into the computer [database] as the team debriefing. (IN0L: 333-345)

Several Department staff members commented on the value of the debriefing sessions for the process. One member summarized the comments in this fashion:

> One of the strongest parts, I think, was that after each public forum there was always a debriefing session which went on for an hour or two. The consultants and the Department staff would discuss what did they hear, what were the key comments, what were the quotable quotes, what were the themes and issues . . . so capturing the gems of activity that occurred. At all the forums there were note takers who recorded all the key points and then these debriefing sessions . . . I think most of the guts of the process occurred in the debriefings. People sent tons of stuff in [written submissions] and that tended to be used to reinforce points that people wanted to reinforce. What was happening had a lot more to do with the debriefing and what people understood to have been said in the meeting. It was important to boil down, boil down to what are the key elements. (IN09: 316-334)

Data Management for the Consultation

Once planning for the consultation project was underway, consideration turned to the issue of data management. The planners knew that the process for Round 1 alone would generate a large volume of information through verbal presentations and written submissions. The consultants assisted with selecting a computer database management and text retrieval software, SONAR, which could support the analysis of the data.

For Round 1, the written submissions were each reviewed and entered into a computer database. The recorder notes from each of the open forum sessions were entered. As well, the debriefing notes from each of the sessions were entered. Submissions and presentations from Department staff members were also captured in a computer file but held separately. The outcome of other working groups and reviews conducted the Department also became part of the database for this policy development activity.

Participation in Round 1 had been open to all stakeholders and the public who chose to attend. The final newsletter for the consultation process reported that fourteen hundred attended the public meetings across the province; 296 made formal presentations and 475 provided written submissions (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, Summer).

Preparing for Budget Consultations

The July Budget Workshop

The introduction of a workshop on budget matters was discussed by the Operations Committee in late April 1993, noting that some consultation on the budget would occur with the public post secondary institutions in July 1993, and that information from this exercise could possibly be rolled into the public consultation (DN04/28/93). The budget consultation was not seen as part of the public consultation process at this time.

In May, following the announcement of the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project, the Minister sent letters inviting representatives of the postsecondary institutions to the July budget workshop. The Minister invited only members of the

Boards of Governors and senior administration of each of Alberta's universities, public and vocational colleges, technical institutes and schools of nursing. The July Fiscal Planning Workshop was essentially a key stakeholder consultation rather than a public consultation. The Operations Committee expressed concern that the public consultation would be overshadowed by the budget workshop and that ideally the budget process should be sequenced later in the consultation rather than conducted as a parallel process (DN05/18/93). Plans for the budget workshop still proceeded.

The Operations Committee chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy and Information Services was responsible for planning the Round 1 consultation sessions but not for planning the July Fiscal Planning Workshop and the later Budget Roundtable. That latter responsibility was handled by the Assistant Deputy Minister for Institutional Support and other staff within the Institutional Support Division. The meeting notes of the Operations Committee indicated that planning updates were requested by the Operations Committee to ensure that their Committee members were kept informed on plans for the budget consultations.

The focus for the July Budget Workshop discussion was on the financial grants to the post secondary institutions and on the Department's 1994-95 budget plan. The institutions were asked in advance of the workshop to generate a list of issues and these became the basis of a workshop agenda. At the workshop, facilitators from a management consulting firm which had assisted the Department with the planning for the sessions, worked with the stakeholders in small discussion groups. Themes from the workshop were summarized and made available for public distribution as part of the background documents for *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation.*

Budget Roundtable

Participants for the Budget Roundtable

A second budget consultation was later planned as a Budget Roundtable in November. Participation in the Budget Roundtable was by invitation. This time the Minister invited 150 individuals with approximately equal representation from both educational deliverers and educational recipients (DN11/05/93). While participants were being identified for the Budget Roundtable, the Operations Committee stressed that the public post secondary institutions should not dominate the stakeholder numbers at the Roundtable and that there needed to be stakeholder input from all areas. The Operations Committee notes indicated that Round 1 participants should be identified and included in the Budget Roundtable to provide continuity (DN09/21/93).

In letters of invitation for that event, the Minister indicated that he was providing a number of options for consideration at the roundtable. The Minister wrote:

> The options reflect the ideas that have arisen from the planning process to date, including suggestions received through public consultation, the results of the July budget workshop and submissions received from universities, colleges and technical institutes before the workshop. (DN11/05/93)

Consultation Document for the Budget Roundtable

In preparation for the November Budget Roundtable, the Department staff members and their management consultants from the July Fiscal Planning Workshop developed a document for distribution to the invited participants of the Roundtable and to those on the mail list database and other interested individuals. This document was designed as a workbook which presented an overview of the consultation process, the fiscal challenge faced by the Department, a framework of guidelines for the process, and outlined three key issues or areas for change. The key issues for discussion were: defining the scope of publicly funded adult education and training; restructuring how adult learning is organized and delivered; and getting the most of the money spent (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, November, p. 6). For each issue area, the workbook presented some background information, several options, highlights of "suggestions we have heard", and a series of questions to address the section of "what do you think".

Format for the Roundtable Sessions

The Budget Roundtable was planned for a one and half day agenda and was hosted at a downtown hotel in Calgary. Registration began at 8:15 a.m. with the welcome scheduled for 9:00 a.m. Participants had been preassigned to discussion teams. Two team or group discussions were scheduled on Day One for 2 hours and 15 minutes each. The plenary highlights which followed them were allocated one hour each. The day concluded at 5:30 p.m. following a "recap". On Day Two the team discussion sessions began at 8:15 a.m. and were scheduled for three hours and 15 minutes to allow time for the discussion of the issue area as well as time for each group to prepare a synopsis of recommendations. The plenary session was planned for just more than one hour in length. Concluding remarks were followed by lunch at 1:00 p.m.

The Minister provided the welcoming comments to open the Roundtable sessions. During the one and half day sessions, the three team discussions or small working groups were each led by facilitators. In the three plenary sessions the teams reported back. Department staff members attended the Budget Roundtable sessions in the role of resource persons who were assigned to and observed the discussion groups but only participated in the discussion when called upon to provide information or clarification.

After the final plenary, the Minister provided concluding remarks in which he outlined the important messages that he had heard both in the team discussions and in the plenary sessions (DN11/20/93). A summary of the major themes and ideas from the Budget Roundtable were prepared and distributed to those participating in the sessions and to all on the mail list database.

Perceptions of the Process of the Roundtable

This Roundtable and the opportunity for a broad based public discussion of financial information and future options for the system was new to many of the participants and for the planners. One Department planner presented these observations:

> The second Roundtable also included students, business people, community people, and it was a much broader focus [than the July Fiscal Planning Workshop]. The Minister made sure that the students were the largest single group of people at that set of meetings. They were also very vocal but in a mature manner (IN08: 88-91) . . . There were representatives from groups within the institutions: students, faculty and staff . . . and [we]

> started generating some lists of private providers.
>
> Our biggest difficulty was trying to get some representation from the business community . . . It was a very good educational experience for a lot of the business people in terms of finding out just what these other people think. Probably if any group changed their opinion or view of things, it was the business community . . . In terms of getting the different groups of people together to talk to each other, [participants] learned as much about each other away from the working groups as they learned in the working groups. (IN08: 168-212)

Some participants offered their perspectives of the process at the Budget Roundtable during my data collection interviews. One institutional president commented:

> The groups had been preselected and we were given specific topics to discuss that were outlined in the workbook. The thing that struck me was that there were people from industry, there were student representatives and there were college board people and presidents--a good cross section--but the interesting thing was that [business people and some students] did not understand the system or its complexity . . . I was in a group with [another president] and we spent a fair amount of time educating--trying to explain why we were where we were at--as opposed to really moving ahead in a visionary way. We just couldn't get [the group] past that. (IN16: 17-35)

There were some concerns about the messages delivered from the discussion groups to the plenary sessions. These concerns were expressed to me from three of the individuals whom I interviewed and who were in different groups at the Budget Roundtable. One interviewee was an institutional president, one a student, and the other a community representative. The following comments were provided from an institutional president:

> The interpretation of what went on [in the group discussion] was sometimes either incomplete or provided a slant that wasn't exactly what we had discussed in our group. Now we were assured that because of the extensive notes that were taken [by the recorder for our group] that that bias would be corrected-- but of course, people left with the impression [of what had been presented in the plenary]. (IN16: 42-45)

A student offered these reflections on the process:

> I noted a lot of people fairly upset with what happened [at the Budget

> Roundtable]. It seemed like a lot of sessions were being led a lot more than facilitated and there was a concern over that . . . Those reports were supposed to be verbatim of the [discussions] and I guess some of those were not exactly what was presented . . . At the end, a lot of people said that their [group] presentations weren't as accurate as they could have been. (IN24: 140-152)

One community member provided this recollection of the process:

> Our group kind of hijacked the facilitator and the process . . . we just felt that the way the questions were designed that they were "divide and conquer" questions. We just said that we were not going to get hung up on this process . . . We thought it would be more valuable to agree on some principles by which decisions should be made. It was like someone had skipped a stage of the process and went right down to the logistics.
>
> One of the challenges that comes out of this process--and this is a risk for anyone working in group process--is that the person representing the group does not always submit to the plenary the message of the group. And that happened to us at the Budget Roundtable . . . [our presenter] hijacked the feedback [from our group] . . . and we were getting down to some very critical points and [because of the reporting] they were not shared other than in the group we were in. (IN01: 542-597)

This concern for emphasis on individual bias in reporting to the plenary was also mentioned to me by another participant immediately following the Budget Roundtable (FN11/23/93).

Information From the Budget Roundtable

The Department staff members compiled the feedback from the Budget Roundtable and the notes from the group discussions and plenary sessions. The feedback on issues from the Budget Roundtable was added to the growing database of information which was received and generated as part of the policy development and review exercises. A summary of the Budget Roundtable discussions was prepared and distributed to the Roundtable participants and the mail database. Department members now worked to finalize the Department Business Plan which was due with the Treasury Board by the end of December 1993.

Consultation and the White Paper

Round Two Consultation

Several strands which contributed to the activities and events of the 1994 time block involving the planning for Round 2 and the gathering and analysis of information for the Options Paper actually began some months earlier. The planning for Round 2 of the public consultation was well underway before the open forum sessions of Round 1 came to a close in mid-October, 1993.

Planning for Consultation

"Public Face" for the consultation. The Steering Committee and Operations Committee had spent much time during the March to June 1993, period debating the strategy or approach that they would adopt for the public consultation. Early consideration was given to naming a "stakeholder committee" that would tour the province, collect input and prepare a report for the Minister. The Minister supported the notion of some "public face" for the consultation but the format was undecided. By late June 1993, the options proposed for consideration included hiring of a highly respected and credible expert, appointing a volunteer committee to be named by the Minister, selecting a volunteer Stakeholder Committee chosen by the Minister, or having the Government itself conduct the consultation being represented by the Department. In July 1993, it was determined that the Round 1 Consultation would be conducted by the Department; the Round 2 Consultation would be hosted by a Moderator who would be a credible expert with links to the post secondary system in Alberta (DN07/21/93).

One Department member discussed the decision for the Department to be the "public face" for Round 1.

> We talked about this in Round 1--whether or not we should have a stakeholder panel that would go around and hear what people would have to say [later about the Options Paper]. It was decided . . . that it was perfectly OK for the Department to be facilitating Round 1 because it was [focused on] information and an exchange. We were just gathering input, information. It was a very preliminary stage . . . Since it was the Department that seemed to know the most about the system as it exists, it

> seemed logical for the Department to go out and take out the facts and figures and produce some of the publications and sit and listen. And answer their questions. (IN0N: 558-567)

After some deliberation and searching, a Moderator was confirmed in early September 1993, although the announcement was not made public until the plans for Round 2 were firm in March 1994. Throughout the planning process, the notes of meetings reflected a concern for maintaining the credibility of the public consultation process. This concern with credibility was reflected in interviews with Department members.

> [The Minister] wanted a credible moderator who could receive the input and feed it back to the participants. [The Minister] wanted that assistance and I think that it worked OK . . . There seems to be some kind of a myth or accepted practice--if you have some credible private sector person between the public and stakeholders *and* [emphasis provided by the interviewee] the government that the process has more legitimacy. (IN0P: 538-545)

This reference to credibility surfaced in discussion with another Department member. "The Minister felt this was someone who would be credible--who would have a credible ear (IN11: 264-265)."

Role of the Moderator. The Moderator became an active participant in the planning for Round 2. He attended some of the open forum sessions in Round 1 and was an invited participant for the Budget Roundtable sessions. The role of the Moderator evolved over time from one initially proposed as a synthesizer to that of a neutral facilitator and a person who would be viewed as independent from the Department.

> [The Moderator] came on board and became an integral part of the planning for Round 2. He was a great value in helping us to identify people who could be invited who could contribute to the quality of the discussions . . . and I thought that he was quite a good chairperson. He was able to feed the stuff back to people so that it was clear that it was he who was listening to them. (IN0P: 547-553)

Improving the consultation process. There was an emphasis in the planning discussions on continually improving the consultation workshop process. For Round 2, more training was provided for recorders and facilitators than they had received for Round 1 and for the Budget Roundtable.

> When we did the recorder training for Round 2 we were able to talk about the lessons learned from Round 1 and the Budget Roundtable and how we could improve on what we had done and how we could do it better. (IN03: 329-332)

> More time was spent with the facilitators in terms of what was required. We had a pre-session and we made it pretty clear what the role of the facilitator was . . . I didn't want [the facilitator] to do the synthesizing. (IN18: 124-128)

Feedback from the Budget Roundtable was incorporated into the planning meetings. Some participants at the Budget Roundtable had indicated that there were some very good ideas on the flip charts in the discussion groups but the participants were unclear as to whether those ideas were incorporated in the overall reporting or whether the information got lost after the sessions. Based on his own experience with the sessions at the Budget Roundtable, the Moderator was determined that for Round 2 ideas would not get lost. The technique adopted was to have one wall in the large plenary conference room set aside so that Round 2 participants, at any time, could paste up ideas and comments using yellow "sticky" note papers.

From the Moderator's perspective it was very important to feed back to those at the Round 2 meetings that he was hearing their messages and that a sense of what they said was captured. The moderator also felt that it was important that the participants at the Round 2 sessions should receive feedback on the sessions at the sessions. He commented on how important it was to get the fast reporting back to the people of what they said, and to repeat it back to them so that they knew that it had not been lost.

Consultation Documents for Round 2

The Options Paper. The initial newsletter, *Keeping You Informed* (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, Summer), which was widely distributed in the Round 1 consultation package, presented a diagram of the public consultation process identifying the activities and their relationship to the overall strategic planning process and the general time lines that would apply. This diagram showed that following the Round 1 regional consultation meetings, an Options Paper would be distributed during Fall 1993. This Options Paper would then serve as the basis for discussion for the Round 2 regional consultation meetings.

The concept of developing an Options Paper had predated the planning of the public consultation process. By January 1994, the planning Committees were considering replacing the Options Paper with a Green Paper but by early February 1994, the planners' thinking had turned to producing a Draft White Paper rather than a Green Paper for the Round 2 discussion paper. This evolution essentially eliminated the later step of preparing a Draft White Paper as an outcome following from the Round 2 consultations.

> What was supposed to happen was that the purple paper [September 1993] would have been rewritten as a result of the input that we got. There would have been a second round of consultation around the rewrite [an options paper] and out of that [would be a process to develop] a White Paper . . . that would drag things out far too long and we would have lost the focus on it. People would have dismissed the fact that we were doing anything serious--we were never going to get done. We had to go straight from the second round of consultation to the White Paper. In fact, the second version [a discussion document] was the Draft White Paper. So it didn't start out with that idea but it seemed to be the right way to go later on as we were feeling our way through it. (IN0Q: 328-338)

Draft White Paper. The preparation of the Draft White Paper involved sorting through the information received from the process to date. That information or database included information from the Round 1 consultation, from the Budget Roundtable, and all of the data from the background research and regulatory reviews done to date. A team of writers was assigned the task of preparing discussion papers in preparation for the development of the Draft White Paper.

> [We] developed what came to be known as theme papers. Basically we used our text retrieval system to identify themes out of all the stuff that we had. And we turned this over to a team of writers who took the stack of printouts and basically told us who was saying what. . . . Those theme papers became critical.

> And it was the first inkling that the consultation was actually going to be a valuable piece. When we began the consideration of what was going into the Draft White Paper, people [in the Department] were saying "well, what did they say during the consultation". Some parts of the decisions were certainly informed by what we got from the public consultation. (IN02: 435-449)

The process of preparing a document such as the Draft White Paper required substantial effort and much time spent and many Department members involved in the writing and rewriting process. The process involved first struggling with ideas then followed by the lengthy task of word smithing to choose words which would convey the intent of the policy document.

> There were two all-day meetings . . . which basically tried to thrash through what should be in the Draft White Paper. We brought together key people in the Department who had reviewed the drafts and proposals, the goals, the mission statement, the strategies. These were critical meetings in terms of the White Paper [writing] group to test ideas with the key corporate people.
>
> In all of this [policy writing], and particularly here, there are two basics--what I would call useful productive animated discussions with people who had strongly held views, but it was certainly a civilized discussion. An example might be how much emphasis should be placed on competition among institutions and how much on collaboration and cooperation. In this there is always going to be an animated discussion on the ideas.
>
> The second part of the process is always the hard work of actually putting down in words exactly what you mean. Once you have decided on a general idea, crafting the final document is a long and arduous process. (IN06: 404-425)

The interviewee also referred to some of the challenges of the process of crafting a policy document in these words:

> There was a lot of internal work and there was agreement that the [four] goals were reasonable goals. The struggle then was how to actually define them and to work out the strategies and [to determine] whether the strategies could be lined up with those various goals in a realistic way. (IN06: 108-111)

Other Department members also reflected on the process of developing the Draft

White Paper.

> All through Round 1 we told people that they were going to be listened to--and we were quite sincere about it. The real struggle became how to reflect what we heard and at the same time reflect what had been an internal thinking process for about a year. Fortunately, there was a lot of overlap but not total. (IN0R: 88-91)
>
> The [Budget Roundtable] was forced into the process . . . yet it had a big influence on the White Paper. If you go back and look at the workbook, you can see a fair amount of the White Paper in the workbook. But the Budget Roundtable was significantly colored by the fact that it was a budget roundtable. (IN15: 278-284)
>
> After Round 1 we started to generate the theme papers from the data collection process and the input that was coming from the budget workshops. When we started generating the theme papers and getting them to the groups who were writing the White Paper, then the processes started coming together. There was lot closer relationship [between the processes] because the consultation process and the development of the policy were happening in parallel. (IN0S: 93-98)

Although the Department recommends to the Minister and assists in the preparation of options and assessing the options, the Minister decides. Several Department staff members reiterated the role of the Minister in the making of policy:

> At the end of the day, whether it is the Standing Policy Committee, whether it is the Executive Committee of Cabinet, whether it is a Ministerial decision with the caucus, the Minister is responsible for the situation in the system. He has to make the final decisions. Ministers always consult widely, beyond their advice from the Department. They will continue to get advice from the Department, but the job of the Department is to crystallize the options, put out the pro and con and then it becomes a Ministerial decision. And Ministers can decide whether they want to go into the process of consultation. Many of the consultations are done by a Minister him/herself . . . look at any Minister's calendar and it is chock full of meetings with stakeholders and client groups. That is what Ministers spend their life doing. (IN06: 201-212)

Throughout the development of the Draft White Paper, the Deputy Minister worked closely with the Minister. Before the release of the document, the Draft White Paper was sent to the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning for information.

The review at Standing Policy Committee preceded forwarding the document to Cabinet and Caucus. The time frame for review, printing and distribution was approximately two weeks (DN03/11/94). With the final review completed, the Draft White Paper was approved for release on March 30, 1994.

The Standing Policy Committee was a new structure established and introduced by the Premier early in 1993 as part of government restructuring. The terms of reference for the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning which handled matters related to Advanced Education and Career Development are outlined in Appendix F. The process of taking policy and budget planning items to the Committee was new. Several Department members commented. One member offered the following observation:

> [Standing Policy Committee] started under this government and . . . has given MLAs a lot of power--more power than they ever had. What [the Premier] has basically done is spread the power base out in his government. The Ministers are responsible for running their departments and bringing policy through but rather than having it just going to a cabinet in which the Ministers are the sole part, it goes to these Standing Policy Committees. If policy doesn't get approved at the Standing Policy Committee, it doesn't stand a chance at ever getting moved on up. (IN08: 497-502)

At the same time, there was recognition in the Department that this was a significant change in process and there were new challenges and risks that went with that change.

> To get a policy initiative through [Standing Policy Committee] you really have to have caucus on side. . . . It has changed the world in which we operate. There was one kind of risk when you would get a "yes" or "no" [from caucus] but it is a very different kind of risk when you can get a "no, but here is what you should do instead" . . . It is a very different milieu. In the government we are working with this external public consultation process and [with] this internal democratized decision making process. It is a far more complex arena than we ever used to have. (IN0T: 81-95)

Consultation Strategy for Round 2

Meanwhile, the planning for Round 2 consultation continued. While the Draft White Paper was being prepared, the planning committees within the Department debated proposals for the structuring of the Round 2 consultation sessions. The committees reflected, and noted, that the consultation processes to date had improved the awareness of stakeholders and the public regarding critical issues and had, from the committees' perspective, created an atmosphere of open dialogue in engaging these issues (DN01/18/94). Meeting notes indicate that in late January 1994, the preferred general strategy for the Round 2 consultation was to present the vision and values to the public along with a number of strategic approaches as the culmination of the previous consultation process and to have the participants then identify implementation strategies rather than provide feedback on their preferences (DN01/26/94).

Selecting Participants for Round 2

In planning for Round 2, the Operations Committee recommended that a large number of participants should be involved and that they should be selected from as diverse areas as possible. It was suggested that about half of the Round 2 invitees be drawn from the participants who had already attended the Budget Roundtable. The objectives for the Round 2 sessions were to bring together an informed group of stakeholders to examine an Options Paper, to provide a forum for discussion, and to obtain a commitment to act. The meeting discussions reflect a continuing concern with maintaining the credibility of the process (DN01/18/94).

The Operations Committee continued to work through the lists of names of possible participants for the Round 2 consultation sessions. The invitees were being selected primarily from the database of 800 names of persons or organizations that had participated in some manner with an earlier aspect of the process. The committee checked the balance between educational providers and educational recipients. Finally, to assist with the process, a set of criteria and a rationale were developed to ensure balance in the invitation list (DN03/17/94).

The Minister had the final approval of the invitation list, as he had for the Budget Roundtable sessions. For Round 2, the Minister added the names of some MLAs, some of whom were Opposition Members and some of whom sat as members of the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning. Approximately 315 participants were invited to Round 2. Between the two meeting sessions in Edmonton and Calgary, a total of 246 participants attended Round 2.

Very few complaints of exclusion were received by the Minister's Office or by the Department concerning the invitation lists.

> I think that we did a pretty good job on selecting the stakeholders because we received very few complaints from anybody saying that groups should have been in. We just didn't get hardly any. And if we did get one or two [calls], we put them in. We had . . . a good cross section. It has to have been or we would have had [negative reactions]. (IN26: 53-57)

Department members continued to examine the invitation lists and to reflect on the mix of individuals who attended the roundtable and consultation sessions.

> I think that we got a really mixed group . . . [One] could look at [the list] and say "who were the dominating kind of forces". . . who got invited and how well did we cover the territory--and also who showed up. We set out to have a very significant business and employer participation. We didn't actually get it. We did but not as strongly as we wanted because they didn't show up. (IN20: 95-100)

Consultation Documents for Round 2

The Draft White Paper was distributed to individuals on the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* mail database who had been involved in the consultation in some way to date. The public reaction was invited to the discussion document through responding to a questionnaire enclosed with the paper and / or by submitting a written response to the paper. The Moderator sent letters of invitation to the Round 2 consultation to the approximately 300 invitees and included copies of the Draft White Paper. Round 2 consultation was underway.

Format for Round 2 Consultation

The Round 2 invited participants responded indicating their availability to attend the sessions. Based on the reply list, all participants were assigned in advance of the sessions to a break-out group.

> We structured the groups very carefully to make sure that the diversity that was in the larger group was reflected in the small group. So that we would have an [institutional] president, a further education council representative,

> an aboriginal representative, a local community association, students--you would have real diversity in the small groups as well. We thought it would enhance the quality of the discussion. (IN0U: 224-229)

Each of the break-out groups had a facilitator provided by the consultation consultant firm to focus the discussion and a recorder provided by the Department to take detailed notes for later analysis. A Department member was also assigned to each group as a resource person who could provide background information. This time the Department resource persons were to be active participants at the table in the discussions to share their views on the content and to provide input to the Draft White Paper (DN 03/14/94). The registration package documents outlined the purpose of Round 2: "to confirm the vision, role and goals statements contained in the Draft White Paper, and to test and receive input on the proposed strategies" (DN05/01/94).

Observation Notes From Round 2

Edmonton Round 2 sessions. I attended the Round 2 sessions in both Edmonton and Calgary as an invited observer. The following observations and comments are taken from my observation notes from those sessions.

> The Edmonton Round 2 sessions were held at the Edmonton Inn on May 2 and 3, 1994. Department members staffed a registration table and provided each participant with a folder containing several information pieces: an overview of the strategic planning and consultation process to date; the process for Round 2 consultation meetings; the role of the Department staff resources; an agenda; lists of the break-out groups; a layout of the hotel meeting rooms; a list of the delegates indicating their organizational affiliation; and a name tag. Additional resource material or summary reports were also available for the participants.
>
> Registration was handled in the large room used for the plenary sessions. The room was set up with theatre style seating, with chairs fanned across the room to handle the 150 expected. At the front of the room, there was a podium as well as an overhead projector and screen. The Moderator's table was angled and off to one side. Along the side of the room was a table for the recorders at the plenary session. Behind the chairs there was a table set up for members of the media. Along and on the rear wall of the room was the area set aside for participants to record

specific comments and ideas using yellow stickies/ "post-it" notes. Messages for participants were also posted on a message board at the rear of the room. There was also a separate room for media briefings and another set up as an office with materials and office equipment.

The Minister and Moderator offered opening remarks commenting on the importance of the meetings and outlining the process over the two days. The Moderator provided guidelines for communication, asking that everyone listen without preconceive notions and to use "generous listening". Then the participants headed off to their respective break-out groups. The ten groups varied in size from nine to 15 participants; the break off rooms varied in size and furniture arrangement.

Each group identified members to provide the reporting back to the plenary session. The responsibility rotated for each of the plenary sessions. Most of the facilitators used a flip chart to help record ideas and track the discussions in the groups. The facilitators were available to support the plenary reporters and to help prepare an overhead with points to summarize the group discussion.

A buffet supper was provided. Participants tended to mix about and not just stay with their discussion groups but to sit with other participants or acquaintances. There was a "good" noise level in the room from the conversations. Department staff members and facilitators were seated randomly throughout the tables. After supper, break-out groups reconvened. Plenary reports on Goals I and II took just more than one hour. As the sessions adjourned, the Department staff members and consultants then convened a meeting to debrief the activities of the day.

Day Two began with participants going directly into their groups. Groups reported to the plenary provided discussion highlights before breaking for buffet lunch. The summary session convened after lunch and ended by 4 p.m.. In that session, the Moderator provided a summary of what he had heard and seen through the two days. The Minister ended the session with comments indicating that there would be changes to the final White Paper document and urging the group to stay involved with the process.

I had the opportunity to move across the groups over the two days, as did some of the consultants and Department staff members who were available as a resource to answer specific questions. The Minister and the Moderator did not participate in the discussions of groups but did move from group to group to observe and to listen. There were lots of hall

> way discussions among the participants and with Department members. I observed that most of the assigned discussion groups had developed somewhat as a group or team over the two days as individuals became familiar with each other and exchanged ideas. Many commented to me and to others that as participants they felt the pressures of limited time deterred the full discussion of the agenda on the table. (ON05/02-03/94)

Calgary Round 2 sessions. With the break of one day, the Department staff members and facilitators moved to Calgary to set up for the second of the Round 2 consultation meetings. Many of the staff members and facilitators worked at both consultation sessions. I again had the opportunity to attend these meetings as an observer. The setup and format was similar for the Calgary meetings, although I noted that the time frames for the sessions were adjusted from the Edmonton schedule in order to allow additional time on Day One for plenary reporting. A similar adjustment was made for Day Two with the start time moved one half hour earlier to allow for more discussion and reporting time. I have drawn the following comments from my observation notes of the sessions.

> The Calgary Round 2 consultation sessions were held on May 4 and 5, 1994 at the Sandman Hotel. The plenary room had similar features and set up as in Edmonton but was somewhat smaller. Many of the break-off rooms had soft, folding walls to divide them from the adjacent room(s) and there was often considerable noise audible between the rooms from the discussions.
>
> Attendance numbers in Calgary were a bit lower than Edmonton due in part, I was told, to other previous competing commitments for the students and to the lack of attendance by some of the invited business community members. Several of the participants seemed to be Calgary based and many knew each other well. Many of the discussion sessions were very lively, even in the first break-off sessions, as participants exchanged ideas and comments. Department members commented to me that individuals were assigned to the groups to provide some balance in the discussions among the participants, to ensure that factual information could be provided to the groups, and to try to have a representative from each stakeholder group in each break-out group as far as possible.
>
> Again I was given the opportunity to move across the discussion groups and to listen and observe. [I must commend the Department staff

> members for the "access" that they have provided me during these Round 2 consultation sessions.] There continued to be a great number of hallway conversations between sessions and over meals.
>
> I had conversations with several individuals who had participated in other aspects of this consultation exercise over the past months. They were able to share with me some reflections on the process. I continued to add names to my own list of potential interviewees for my research study. Several comments were made during the plenary reporting sessions indicating that participants had enjoyed the opportunity to participate and had learned from the experience. Other comments suggested that the system needed more opportunities like this for dialogue and communication.
>
> On Day Two, the Moderator provided a summary of the sessions and presented some themes as he saw them develop. At the end of the session, participants were provided with copies of the notes that were used for the Moderator's summary. The Minister's concluding remarks indicated that he was not displeased with the diversity of views presented throughout the meetings and that consensus had been achieved in some areas. He reiterated that he had been listening and that the input would be reflected with some changes in the final White Paper. Again he encouraged participants to continue their commitment and to take a role in the process in the future. As with the Edmonton sessions, the Minister had attended most of the time during the two day meetings--something that was noted by several of the participants.
>
> After participants had departed, the Department staff members, facilitators and consultants gathered for a debriefing meeting. More than forty were present. The participation in the discussion was broadly based, with comments coming from facilitators, recorders, resource persons and senior staff members. The group as a whole reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of the process of this consultation session. The group was rewarded for their efforts during the week with popsicles. (ON05/05-06/94)

Perceptions of Round 2

Each of the stakeholder participants whom I interviewed that had participated in the Budget Roundtable sessions had reflected upon the diversity and complexity of the adult learning system and how a sense of that had emerged in their group discussions. Some interviewees also commented on the fact that they had spent time in those groups trying to inform or educate other participants about the system and its current operation. One institutional administrator offered these observations in comparison on the Round 2 sessions:

> There was a little different cross section in the May meeting but the presidents and the Board representatives were still there. . . . I think that the [participants overall] were a little more informed. . . . There were strategies and people were able to read them through and focus on them. It appeared to be a much more knowledgeable focus that people were bringing, that was my perception. (IN16: 178-191)

Another interviewee from Round 2 was participating in the consultation sessions for the first time, although this individual had contributed to the development of position papers and had attended meetings with Department members and the Minister earlier in the process. The comments from this individual underscored again the uncertainty felt by some participants due to the newness of the process and the skepticism some held about the role consultation might play in the outcome.

> I was rather pleased to be there. I was certainly looking forward to it. I was interested in what kind of a process was being used. I had no idea what kind of process would be used. And I was more than a little skeptical about whether or not the process was a legitimate one--whether or not there was meaningful consultation -- and I was somewhat cynical as to the motive. At the same time I was not entirely negative. I wasn't entirely without hopes that there could be an effect from this.
>
> I was skeptical primarily because of the remarks made, not so much by Advanced Education, but by the Premier about the motives and the goals of government--that there was a fairly clearly articulated agenda and that was going to be followed irrespective of any comments made by the particular interest groups who ever they happened to be . . . My test of whether the Minister was listening was whether or not there was any influence on the development of these statements [in the final White Paper]. And I would say that yes, there was some change as it went along. (IN21: 40-75)

One Department staff member offered a comparison of the Round 1 and Round 2 sessions based on the personal experience and observations through involvement in several of the consultation sessions.

> From my perspective, I think that the atmosphere created by the

> consultants and the resource people in the first round of discussions was far far far [repetition provided by the interviewee] more open than it was in the second. In the second round, time was so limited and the number of issues so much greater than it had originally been that [the opportunity] for information exchange was reduced. Although people were able to speak very directly to the bottom line issues [more] than they had in the past--they had more issues [to consider] but less time. People came [to the Round 2 sessions] to focus very directly on their own agenda. (IN04: 133-140)

Department Staff Members Consultation

During the planning for Round 2, Department staff members requested that a consultation session be organized for staff members to allow the opportunity for them to provide their reactions and input into the process. It was noted in the meeting notes that the Department staff members would be given equal opportunity to provide input into the Draft White Paper through a forum which was to be similar to that organized for the public (DN03/25/94). A Department Town Meeting was set up for May 13, 1994. Recorder notes from the discussions were entered into the computerized database in a file separate from the public input.

The involvement of Department staff members in a separate consultation session may have been a unique aspect of this consultation process. One Department member commented on this component and some possible benefits which may have been contributed to the process.

> One of the things that we did was to consult within the Department too. We had special sessions for within the Department. I'm not sure that had been done before. . . . The advantage of talking to the people inside the Department is they work closely with certain external people and there might be things that we hadn't thought about that had touched them. Plus, it made [the staff] a part of the process. They were not allowed to influence the process. We did not put them in as the opinion makers. We put them in as: is there something that we have forgotten, is there something that we didn't notice, did we ever address this, did we ever think about this. People learned from other people about what they do. . . . When we first went out [in Round 1], one of the intents externally was to educate and to inform the public. And it worked for our own staff as well. (IN10: 433-450)

Communications and the Consultation Process

The Newsletter: Keeping You Informed

The role of communication was recognized as playing an important part in the design of this consultation process. A newsletter, *Keeping You Informed*, was developed for the consultation and was distributed to the mail list database on three occasions between September 1993 and August 1994. The first newsletter, dated Summer, 1993, was distributed with the consultation documents for Round 1. The newsletter was designed to increase awareness of the consultation and provided an overview of the various components of the process along with information on how to participate in the process. The second newsletter, dated Fall 1993, provided a brief summary of the presentations from the Round 1 meetings. The third and final newsletter before the release of the White Paper, dated Summer 1994, provided a summary of the written submissions and discussions from the Round 2 consultation meetings.

At the Round 2 consultation, the Moderator presented a verbal summary of the sessions. Participants each received copies of the notes developed by each group speaker for the report to the plenary sessions and of the summary notes prepared by the Moderator. In the third newsletter, the Moderator's column provided a summary of "what we heard" which was essentially the feedback he had provided in the final plenary sessions in May.

The Moderator wrote the following in Moderator's Column:

> The written submissions carried many similar messages to those I heard in Edmonton and Calgary. It should be noted, however, that these messages reflected the viewpoint of the individual and respondent type while the messages brought forward from the Edmonton and Calgary meetings represented a measure of consensus resulting from a collaborative discussion of ideas. (*Keeping You Informed*, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, Summer, p. 4)

Communication Strategy

The newsletters provided feedback to stakeholders and served as an important communication strategy for the consultation.

> At each stage we would also feed back to people a 'this is what we heard' document. It gave us a chance to ensure that we had heard correctly. And the final one was in August [1994]--that is when we said "this is what we heard from you" and basically . . . people felt they had been heard. They could see where their comments were. They could see their issue raised. (IN11: 52-57)

The use of feedback in this manner in this consultation represented a new communication strategy for the Department. It was a communication style, however, that at times brought with it a level of uneasiness for some of the Department staff members and the Minister.

> When we were out doing the first and second rounds of consultation we were really feeding back to people what they said--even when we didn't like what they said at all--and some of it we found quite scary. In the old world we would have tried to find a way to bury that. And I think what we all learned, is you feed people back exactly what you heard and put it in the context of everything else you heard and, at the very least, it gives people the comfort that they have been heard and what they have said didn't go unnoticed.
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> So when the final policy comes out there is more comfort with it. There is explicit recognition that at least "you saw what I said, you heard it, you wrote it down, and you probably thought about it." And in the end it was quite helpful.
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> I can think of a couple of the [newsletter] documents--when we would be in our second to last draft--and we showed [the Minister] the things that we had in there--and he got pretty nervous--[and we said] "we are just reporting on what we heard". . . . But I think that the change that we made is that we explicitly acknowledged that we heard things. And that really helped. (IN0W: 119-140)

Other interviewees also commented on this new open style of communication and the value of providing feedback to the stakeholders.

> The What We Heard document was really an unsung document in the whole process . . . It was an incredible document. It was done under the authorship and direction of [the Moderator]. If we [the Department] had written that--it would have been thrown out. . . . You need to have someone who could really say what was said--but if you look at what [he] did in that document, clearly there was no opposition to what he had heard. People who were there said, "I did hear that, that is a reasonable analysis of

> it." Maybe further down the road there will be other issues, but he was an excellent player in synthesizing what took place on that draft White Paper. Something that we didn't have at any other steps along the way.
>
> Plus there were also those written documents that have come in. . . . And every single one of those was looked at, compiled, and analyzed. I remember seeing a What We Heard document and [being] surprised that they had put in that section on 'supportive and not supportive' . . . . And I was shocked when I saw [the Moderator's] report. I couldn't believe that we could actually do that. And that was really useful because then you started seeing issues that were in the draft White Paper that went through the consultation process and were being generally accepted. We were now making a big leap toward coming together with some answers. (IN13: 497-517)

Preparing the White Paper

Round 2 Outcomes

The purpose of the Round 2 sessions was to focus the discussion of the stakeholders on the Draft White Paper with its proposed vision, goals and strategies. The discussion and debate during the sessions was much more focused than in the earlier rounds of consultation. The discussions during Round 2 served to provide specific input for the White Paper.

> The impact of the Round 2 consultations on the actual White Paper became much more focused. We had identified "hot button areas"--you know, issues of real contentiousness. And if it was not a contentious issue [at Round 2], by and large it went fairly straight across from the Draft White Paper to the New Directions document [which was the final White Paper]. The wording may have changed but that is largely cosmetic. Not cosmetic just because we wanted to change.
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> What we wanted to do was to make the New Directions a much leaner document, with less justification, less history. We wanted it to be a policy document that says this is what we are going to do. The impact of Round 2 was very direct and very precise toward the specific issues in the White Paper. (IN02: 463-472)

Analysis of Round 2 Information

Department staff members now moved to the challenge of writing and finalizing the White Paper. An important linkage between the consultation process and the policy development process was the ability to move the information captured through the consultation process across to the policy development process in a timely manner.

> People who were writing the theme papers and doing the analysis . . . were supposed to look for who was saying what, [and] what is important to those people. That is what [the analysts] tried to feed across to the policy process. . . . The other thing was giving that information to people in time that they could use it. . . . So we turned information around--the first stuff was within a week of coming out of Round 2. Within a week they had the theme papers, two weeks for more detailed analysis.
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> [Department staff members] came out [of Round 2] thinking that they heard what they heard and they were just ready to roll. And the idea was to hang on--you were in one session. And you were [tired] when it came to the recaps and those weren't [always complete]. Just wait for the considered response. And we had those in [writer's] hands so that . . . it could in fact inform the policy decisions. (IN0V: 630-646)

Write and Rewrite

The writing and the rewriting of the document took several months. The process of developing the document was an iterative process, one of writing, reviewing, rewriting and one involving extensive consultation within the Department. .

> Clearly you want someone who understands the political realities to be the person who is doing the penholding. So that obviously the consultation, at that point, became internal consultation between the Minister and the Deputy [Minister] and the people who were actually doing the assemble. That [internal] consultation was just as critical as the other [external consultation]. The integration and synthesis was a critical *critical* [emphasis by interviewee] stage of the process. Not only did it require a great deal of time and effort and thought but it also required knowledge and sensitivity on the part of the people who were doing the writing. It was their ability to consult and contact people for pieces of required information that was the major task of the Department. . . . I think it can be viewed as a separate stage of the policy process. (IN04: 216-226)

Participants had offered some criticism at the Round 2 sessions that the Draft White Paper lacked internal consistency with the sections reflecting a different writing style and use of different terminology. This was acknowledged by one of the Department staff members: "The draft [White Paper] was a reasonable piece of work but it was a committee document . . . so it didn't flow well but the ideas were intriguing enough (IN12: 78-81)." The writing of the final document still involved a large number of individuals within the Department. One Department member, however, was identified for the exclusive task of the editor for the final document.

> [The writer/editor] put an amazing amount of time in and was constantly being bombarded with someone else's fine tuning. [He] was very good about double checking to make sure that this was right. I know I got several pieces to check over to make sure that this was the way that I thought it should be presented. And he was good about picking up the ideas and getting them back into the document reasonably well. Of course, he worked very very closely with [the Deputy Minister]. (IN12: 85-90)

The writing, internal consultation, and the editing process continued throughout the summer months. The document writing task turned into one that was larger and longer than had been anticipated.

Ministerial Support for Policy Options

Finalizing the policy decisions to be included in the White Paper involved a series of discussions described best as an iterative process both within the Department and between the Department and the Minister's office.

> The major policy issues come through the [Corporate Management] Committee for discussion to make sure that we were all agreeing. . . . Once we get [the policies] to the point where we were prepared to make a recommendation, we then take it to the Minister and discuss the options. In practical terms, this is not a one time activity but is sort of a back and forth, back and forth. (IN0X: 379-387)

Approval Process for the White Paper

The Draft White Paper was earlier referred to as the Department's document; the White Paper was now the Minister's document. The Minister had the responsibility of moving the White Paper through the channels necessary to obtain the approval of government. The approval process for the completed White Paper is a political one within government. Gaining approval involved presenting the White Paper first to the Standing Policy Committee, then to Cabinet, and finally to the full caucus. Endorsement from each group was required to allow the document to move forward.

In terms of getting policy decisions from Cabinet, [I have been told] that

> our [Department's] policy decisions were the most successfully managed of any policy decisions that the government made [during this period of change] in terms of a smooth process. . . . We had decision points and time lines.
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> We made what turned out to be a very important tactical decision when we took the four toughest policy decisions and said we want to take these through [Standing Policy Committee] separately [from the complete paper]. . . . It was a genuine worry based on our business plan experience [with Standing Policy Committee] that the [White Paper] was so big and so complex that if we laid it all on at once that it would be overwhelming. (IN0Y: 390-410)

Release of the White Paper

With all the political approvals in place, on October 20, 1994, the Minister presented his White Paper, entitled *New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta*, (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, October) at a press conference and later that day tabled the paper with the Legislative Assembly. Overall the public reaction to the White Paper was rather quiet. The White Paper seemed to contain few surprises, perhaps due to the extensive consultation process. One Department representative commented, "The paper reflected what was [discussed]. No surprises really. There was nothing in there that was radical or that [the public and stakeholders] couldn't digest--because we had worked all that out (IN26: 182-184)". Another interviewee commented from an institutional perspective:

> If you had been involved all along, then there were absolutely no surprises in the White Paper. We knew what the issues were and what would be there. The issues were three, five, and ten years ongoing: tuition, transfer, access, degree granting, etc. The process resulted in a narrowing, a focusing and a sharpening of the issues. (IN25: 46-49)

Discussion with the Department and with stakeholders had by then already moved to focus on ways to change the system to implement the new directions outlined in the White Paper.

Research Question #3:
What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?

During the planning and implementation of the consultation process issues arose. References to these issues, as points of uncertainty or disagreement, were often documented in meeting notes and addressed in internal documents. Some of these issues were also referred to by interviewees during the course of data collection for this study. Through my analysis of the data, four sets of issues were identified. These were issues which emerged early during the planning process and which continued to be woven into aspects of the ongoing discussions throughout implementation of the consultation process. The four emergent issues which I identified focussed on the following:

- developing the relationship between the consultation and policy processes
- aligning the Budget Roundtable with the public consultation process
- maintaining the credibility of the public consultation process
- integrating the processes of public consultation and policy development.

Developing the Relationship Between the Consultation and Policy Processes

The meeting notes to which I had access did not indicate the extent nor the details of discussions on this issue, however, the notes did reflect that there were tensions within the Department surrounding several aspects of the relationship between the consultation process and the policy development process in Round 1. These tensions focused on the timing and sequencing of the processes in Round 1, determining the approach to be taken with the consultations, and determining the objectives and purpose for Round 1.

Timing and Sequencing of the Processes in Round 1

An early indication that there was an issue with the consultation process and the policy development process was noted at a meeting in late April 1993, in which the Operations Committee discussed the concept of the Strategic Options paper. The meeting notes indicated that the two Assistant Deputy Ministers, one responsible for the consultation process and the other working on the development of strategic policy options, would follow up with discussions with the Deputy Minister on concerns around the development and timing of the Strategic Options document (DN04/28/93).

The concerns arose from the public consultation process as it was being proposed in April 1993 (DN04/22/93). Many changes were to later evolve with both the time lines. However, the proposed time lines in April 1993, showed the sequencing of activities:

Time line	Activities
May 1993	Announcement of the public consultation process
June / July 1993	Release of the background and trends information
August / September 1993	Workshops, public meetings, written submissions from public and stakeholders
October 1993	Release of Options Paper, including summaries of submissions
October-December, 1993	Broad consultation on Options Paper
January 1994	Report on consultation to Minister and participants
Spring 1994	Announcement of Government plan Implementation framework

Table 5: Proposed Time Lines and Activities for Public Consultation, April 1993

The Strategic Operations groups argued that the time lines were not realistic and to have the Options Paper readied for release in October 1993, that the development of the options and the writing of the paper would have to occur prior to and during the period of time that the input from the public and stakeholders was being received. Others argued that the Department should wait to receive the public input prior to the development and writing of the Options Paper, that to not wait would provide limited opportunity for the public input to influence the options.

The Operations Committee meeting notes indicated that follow-up discussions took place on the issue. These notes placed the Operations Committee on record with "a strong disagreement" to proceeding with the preparation of the options paper prior to the consultations, and further indicated that writing the paper at that time could discredit the consultation (DN05/12/93).

The Steering Committee determined that the work to date of the Strategic Options group should be made available to the Operations Committee to be integrated into the development of the consultation documentation and process (FN10/24/94). The Strategic Options group members continued their work but shifted the focus of their attention to developing an analytical framework that would better allow the group undertaking the analysis of the consultation information to prepare a database of options.

References to this tension over the timing and sequencing of the processes surfaced during the interviews for this study. The tension illustrated one dimension of the issue which was the challenge that existed overall to appropriately sequence and manage the timing of the multiple processes which contributed to the development of the White Paper.

Approach to Consultation

A second and a related dimension to this issue was the tension around the approach to the consultation sessions. This issue centred around choosing between two differing approaches for the Round 1 consultation sessions. One approach was a "blank page" (consult first, develop options second); the other approach was the "straw dog" (present options, gather input). One interviewee outlined for me the opposing perspectives around this issue.

> What you had were two different philosophies or attitudes toward strategic planning in a public context. There was the attitude which said that we don't do anything about strategic options until we have heard from the public and then we develop our strategic plan based on what we have heard from the public. And then there was the attitude . . . which was [that] we do a lot of thinking about strategic options and we go to the public and we get their input and we then adjust and change. . . . You float the ideas. That tension ran right through to and included the budget [roundtable]. (IN0RR: 112-121)

Comments from another interviewee regarding this difference in attitude made reference to discussions of the Operations Committee around this issue.

> The Operations Committee was set up to manage the public part of the consultation and amongst other things there was some dissonance between the old process and the new one . . . Some from Advanced Education felt that [we] were part way through a process and those from Career Development thought that [we] were just starting one. And these two things rubbed up against each other. . . . There was a certain amount of tension because . . . 'what are you doing off there and looking at things that should only be coming out of the public consultation'.
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> [The Operations Committee] generally felt that [the strategic options group] shouldn't be second guessing the public process by exploring options within the department, that that was somehow dishonest. We had a strategic process for the now amalgamated department and if [that process] was just going to sit there passively and wait to see what came out of the great public debate--[in my opinion] that was an act of suicide. So [the options group] carried on--looking at options. (IN0Z: 203-223)

Two Department members offered comment on this issue and the fact that a great deal of prior work had been completed on the background to developing policy options before the introduction of the public consultation processes.

> [Going into Round 1] we couldn't give up on all our internal thinking and just capitulate . . . I don't think [we] ever go into anything without having some idea of where [we] would like to come out--[we] may not always come out where [we] would want but I don't think anyone enters a planning process with a blank page. (IN0AA: 108-111)

> We were not going [into this consultation process] to say "we don't know what we are doing, tell us". . . We were able to be quite honest with people in terms of our feedback document and able to say to them "this is what we heard and this is what we are going to do with the information". But we never pretended that everything that they told us would make it into the final document. That was not even on the table. (IN0BB: 113-118)

Objectives for the Consultation and Purpose of Round 1

A similar debate also surfaced in discussions as the Operations Committee worked at setting the objectives for the process and defining the purpose of the Round 1 consultation.

> We had a real issue as to whether or not we were there to educate the public. Some said that was the sole purpose of Round 1, that we were not

> there to receive input but we were there only to educate [the public] and to bring them up to speed on issues . . . We obviously have a need to have some basis of information but to say that we are just educating and that's all--well. . . . Most people who came forward and spoke at a forum had considered opinions . . . so what we got back was some general indication as to what direction [the Round 1 participants] wanted adult learning in Alberta to go. (IN0CC: 142-158)

The purpose of the consultation was described by another Department member as primarily to provide public input into the policy process. Comments from the following interviewee illustrate the various perspectives which were held throughout the process regarding the purpose of the consultation sessions and the relation to the development of the options for consideration for the White Paper.

> There were several [objectives for the consultation]. I think a primary one was to get the input that we needed to the policy process. We needed to get people's ideas and to find out what they were thinking and what they wanted and what they hated. So seeking input was a key one.
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> But I think that building networks was another [objective] . . . you have informed and interested publics. . . . And you keep going out and coming back to the process and if you are doing it right you are adding more and more people each time. And people that you consult with in one part may be completely different people than you consult with in another . . .
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> The primary goal for [the consultation] was to make sure that we could get public input into the policy process on an ongoing basis. . . . The whole purpose of doing the consultation was to inform the development of the New Directions [White Paper], a big new policy initiative for the Department. (IN0DD: 401-446)

The Outcome

Although there were struggles, there were resolutions for these issues. The work of the Strategic Options groups was taken into consideration and integrated into the public consultation documents being prepared for Round 1. Consideration of the strategic options did continue throughout summer and fall, 1993, prior to and during the Round 1 consultations. After much agonizing, the objectives and outcomes for the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* were finalized and approved in September 1993, as the Round 1 consultation was underway. Information which was coming from the Round 1 consultation was provided to the analysis group in as timely a fashion as possible so that information could be considered in the development of options for presentation in the next consultation activity which was to be the Budget Roundtable.

Aligning the Budget Roundtable With the Public Consultation Process

The proposed consultation process outlined by the Operations Committee in April 1993 (DN04/22/93), which I referred to in the discussion of the previous issue, identified the public consultation activities as workshops, public meetings, written submissions, and broad consultation activities. This provided a related set of activities that were primarily focused on consultation to support the development of policy options for a White Paper for a new direction for adult learning in the province. The introduction of business plans and the requirement for budget consultations created a further set of issues related for this planning process within the Department.

Introduction of Budget Consultations

In his Budget Speech of May 6, 1993, the Provincial Treasurer publicly introduced a requirement for all Departments to prepare three year business plans which would outline long term goals and program objectives, spending requirements within a financial plan, and specific means to measure results and performance. The Budget '93 document (Alberta Provincial Treasurer, 1993) included a section entitled "Changing the Way Government Does Business" and listed strategies which outlined steps to open up the system and to provide more accountability.

> Albertans will be kept informed about what their government is doing and its fiscal health. We will:
> •engage in full and open consultations with stakeholders and interested parties to review programs, policies and budgets,
> •continue the Budget Roundtable process which began successfully at the Red Deer sessions in March. . .
> •prepare performance reports relative to the three year business plans and release them to the public. (p. 16)

The Provincial Treasurer was now calling for all Departments to consult with their stakeholders through roundtable meetings regarding expenditure reductions as part of the government's deficit reduction strategy. In late April 1993, Department staff members were beginning to plan for a workshop or roundtable session with public post secondary institutions on the upcoming budget to examine the implications of reductions to funding grants and issues facing the system.

> Having had a [Department] amalgamation wished on top of this [strategic planning and public consultation] process, we then had to deal with the business planning idea from the new government. And that was being driven at full speed by the Treasurer.
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> I don't think that anybody had any clear idea really of what business planning meant in a government context. So it was being invented as we went along. And the rules were changing all the time--you didn't know from one day to the next what the rules were--it was like playing a game that had not been identified, for which there were no rules, and you were playing in the dark. As you bumped into people and problems, than a new rule would emerge and, if you guessed wrong about what the rule was going to be, then you were in trouble. So what we had to [eventually] do was merge business planning with our already underway strategic planning exercise with its big public consultation. (IN0EE: 227-239)

Aligning the Budget Roundtable and Public Consultation Processes

Concerns regarding the introduction of the budget roundtable and the implications that might have for the public consultation process were raised in discussions at the Operation Committee meetings (DN05/ 05/93). The meeting notes pointed out that while the roundtable was not part of the public consultation process that the roundtable would impact the process. A concern was raised that the budget workshop with its focus on budget might overshadow the public consultation process, and that the budget process and the public consultation process were being conducted in parallel when the ideal would be to sequence the budget process after the public policy consultations (DN05/18/93).

> It got to a point where the budget roundtable exercise and everything [else] was running parallel. And it was [observed that] "this stuff all feeds in, this is all part of one process". So we deliberately integrated all these separate activities into the process of restructuring the system. That was a great break through in terms of not modifying options that had already been developed but being very clear to people that "yes, we have been doing some thinking but this is a genuine desire to find out from stakeholders as

to whether or not we were on the right track". (IN0FF: 73-79)

Some resolution to the uncertainty of the relationship of these separate consultation processes was then proposed in August 1993, as time lines for the project activities were revised and refined. The project notes on the time line identified that the approach was now to clearly delineate and align the processes of the Budget Roundtable and the Adult Learning Consultation into a coordinated consultation strategy (DN08/23/93). The focus of the Roundtable process was to be on financial decisions with a three-year time horizon and that process was to support the development of a Business Plan. The focus of the Adult Learning Consultation was to be on strategic decisions with a ten to twenty-year time horizon and that process was to result in a White Paper on Adult Learning. This project planning document also referred to a number of the concurrent consultation processes also initiated by the Department and which could have a significant influence over the direction of both strategic and financial decision. The document noted that participants, i.e., stakeholders and the public, should be made aware that their contribution would be taken in the context of other decision processes.

This project planning document (DN08/23/93) clarified the role of the two processes. The alignment into a coordinated strategy helped to identify the contribution of each process to the development of the Business Plan and the White Paper. However, the timing of the requirement for budget consultation and the development of a Business Plan added a significant challenge to the policy planning process. The task to align these two processes was not an easy undertaking. The responsibility for coordinating the public consultation had been assigned to one Assistant Deputy Minister in the Department; the responsibility for the budget workshop and roundtable was now assigned to another Assistant Deputy Minister. "We were trying to fit in a budget workshop and then the larger budget consultations. . . [these] were slowly being wedged into the public consultation process because [at first] they were not regarded as part of the public consultation process" (IN20: 149-152).

> The new reality that we had to cope with in the midst of all was [the introduction of] business plans. These were all part of the government's

> larger agenda. And both our challenge and our accomplishment was gradually merging our public consultation process with the new government demand. (IN0GG: 143-147)

Maintaining the Credibility of the Public Consultation Process

My analysis revealed a continuing concern on the part of the Department for the credibility of the consultation process overall. The words "credibility" and "credible" continually recurred in both the records reviewed as well as in the interview data. This was further reflected in the wording used in the statement of objectives for the various components of the consultation process. Meeting notes show the decision to select a "credible" Moderator for the consultation. Department members were concerned with maintaining the credibility of the process in two aspects: first, in the context of budget consultations and the resulting business plan which was being developed simultaneously to the public consultation process; and second, in the context of the general perception held by the public of the legitimacy of the process.

Budget Consultations and the Development of the Business Plan

There was a major concern for the impact that the preparation of the Department's business plan might have on the public consultation process. One Department member referred to the concern in these words:

> I think one of the things that was the most confounding influence in this whole process was the business plan. It really did throw a [wrench] into the works. It threatened to completely shoot the credibility of the consultative process. It just came at the absolute worst time. There could not have been a worse time for [the business plan] schedule and [the consultation] schedule. We ended up with all these overlapping processes. (IN0HH: 397-401)

Another Department member commented on the concern which the impact of the business planning process might have on the integrity of the consultation process.

> All of the threads began to come together. And then the government's own agenda to cut the deficit was imposed on us with demands to do budget consultations--and we had the imposition of the three-year plan that was required of every Department. Now those things mapped smack on

> our public consultation process. We had to find ways to incorporate them without compromising the integrity of the consultation process.
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> I was one that speculated that people would not buy-in if they really thought that we had made our budget decisions, and that the budget preempted a lot of directional choices we could have made if we had simply gone to public consultation.
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> We ended up having to do the budget consultation even prior to the public consultation and then had to submit our three-year plan in the year that we were doing the consultation. We were in the position of trying to analyze that information, put it into a document at the same time we had gone through two rounds of budget consultations and by then had to submit the business plan. (IN0JJ: 50-66)

Once the Department had determined that a second budget roundtable would take place in November 1993, the Committees then had to decide on how to structure the sessions and how to gather public input on budget plans while trying to maintain the credibility of the public consultation process. The meeting notes from the Operations Committee reflect the discussions around this issue and the suggestion that an effective Budget Roundtable would require a focus on the realities of the next three years, realities that might be included in the Department's proposed business plan. This focus on those realities would result in presenting a number of the strategic options that would later have been included in an Options Paper for consultation in Round 2 (DN09/21/93). This would mean, in effect, that the Budget Roundtable would present the substance of the Options Paper. Consideration was now given to discussing some strategic options at the Budget Roundtable sessions and to then preparing a Draft White Paper which would be the basis of consultation for Round 2.

This shifting of the budget consultations into the public consultation process and using that forum to present some strategic options had implications that were described by a Department member:

> [A]nd the budget roundtable now became a step in the public consultation. So that many of the options that were bursting around and had been identified in these earlier processes emerged in [the Budget Roundtable] workbook. . . so here we were talking about real strategies before we had fully completed our public consultation.
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> And there was some real discomfort there--and legitimately. [There

> was] a short term planning process being mapped on top of something that is trying to set directions for a longer time frame. And while both are strategic in nature, the two time frames were out of sync and we had to somehow try to keep them together. So it wasn't easy--until they really started to come together in the Draft White Paper-- the elements from the Budget Roundtable and the discussions. (IN0NN: 249-260)

Following soon after the November 1993, Budget Roundtable, the Department was required to submit its three-year business plan to Treasury and to present the plan to the Standing Policy Committee. The Department's first business plan was turned back to the Department for further work.

> [Our business plan] got kicked back by the Standing Policy Committee . . . [The Deputy] was trying to maintain the integrity of our consultation process. At the same time the [Standing Policy] Committee was demanding that we put details on paper. We were trying to make our business plan very general. When we first submitted [the business plan], we were trying to be honest to both processes [consultation and business planning] but the Standing Policy Committee didn't like it. It was too general for them.
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> We wound up going back and refining it. Getting it to the point of refinement where the Standing Policy Committee could accept it but where the detail wouldn't betray our process. And by the time we finally did submit our final business plan, our public consultation was getting . . . close to the end. . . . And we always told everyone that the business plan was a plan and that the public consultation could affect it. (IN0KK: 339-368)

This was reinforced with these comments:

> We [in the Department] were feeling very compromised. This was one of the issues that was at the Operations Committee: How could we have a business plan for three years and try to pretend that we were doing public consultation at the same time? How do we reconcile these? People will say that we have decided on all the key things in the business plan--the rest is just window dressing.
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> And the Department honestly struggled with that. Stood up to the Policy Committee in the first round of review by saying that our business plan was fuzzy necessarily. [The Standing Policy Committee] hammered us for it. But we stood up to [Standing Policy Committee] and we came back later on with a more elaborate plan. (IN0LL: 329-337)

Public Perceptions of the Legitimacy of the Process

The public and stakeholders held a certain level of skepticism of the process as it unfolded. As I noted earlier, one community stakeholder commented to me that

> [Round 1] was a good opportunity to have our voice heard--there was a lot of skepticism as to whether or not it would make a difference. . . whether or not they would listen or if decisions had already been made. (IN19: 8-11)

This was reinforced by comments from another individual who said, "My expectations initially were very low [going into this process] because there wasn't a lot of strength in the belief in the value of the process. There was a lot of 'why bother, will it make a difference?' (IN22: 200-202)". Another comment from a community stakeholder provided some elaboration on the attitude of skepticism that several held toward the consultation process.

> I don't think that I talked to anybody that didn't feel that the decisions had already been made. This [consultation] is just going to either verify what [the Department] already knows, or it's not going to make a [bit] of difference but it is going to pacify a lot of people who want to be heard, and "we'll make it seem like we are listening". I'd be really interested to find out how much they really did listen before the documents were made--or were the documents created and then tinkered with after they got the results in? (IN0MM: 135-140)

This attitude of skepticism seemed to lessen as individuals became more engaged with the process. This community stakeholder went on to comment on the personal change in attitude as a result of participating in one of the Round 1 consultation forums held in a smaller centre.

> [Our organization] got involved in the process deciding it was important [in spite of the fact that] at that point in time there was [an attitude of] "well, what is the point? we are not going to be listened to anyway". We went to [a smaller Alberta centre for the Round 1 session] and I got a better sense because of [the senior Department member who was there]. . . that maybe they were going to listen. Maybe the document is done but maybe they are going to listen. I had a renewed sense of --not hope--but a sense that this process may have value, that it is not a busy exercise but there may be some validity in doing what we are doing and it may be listened to. (IN0MM: 217-228)

An institutional administrator who participated throughout the consultation and budget processes provided this comment when asked about the perspectives that participants took toward the process:

> I do think people felt that [the process] was real enough and that they had the possibility of influencing the outcome. I am sure others will say this was all part of a scheme and the end product was known two years before hand--[but] that is not my view. (IN25: 203-206)

One of the Department members who had participated in several of the Round 1 consultation sessions reflected on the skepticism that seemed to exist at the beginning of the process and on some changes that were noted during the sessions. The following story conveyed this individual's perception of the change in attitude which came about through participation at the forums.

> [There was some skepticism in the community:] "it is all done, everything is decided, we are just going out to chat". My perception in the discussions of what was happening is that when people went to the meeting they were sitting like this--with their arms folded--[and thinking] "ok, I didn't have anything else to do tonight anyway but I had to come and see what you guys were up to"--but about half way through the public forum people were saying "well, maybe this is for real, maybe this is true, I bet you won't write this in your report".
>
> And I think that in the forums that I attended. . . about half way through most times people lightened up and said "oh ya, like, we're in this together. I'm glad you are here listening". The summaries that came out reflected a lot of what was said. . . . We got quite a lot of positive feedback and [people] went away thinking "well, we think it is credible" and people are seeming to respond that it is credible. (IN09: 168-192)

Department staff members were well aware of the skepticism. Instructions in the orientation sessions for members attending Round 1 sessions stressed the need to "listen".

> We had a lot of criticism thrown at us--"you are being driven by the three-year business plan, or the fiscal targets, or you don't address our needs, or this is too economic" or whatever. But we made a deliberate decision that we would suspend our personal feelings about it and just listen. What are these people saying? What kinds of suggestions are they making that could change something? . . . I was really impressed that people went in there and there was a real commitment to hear and to learn. (IN11: 458-473)

Communications strategies throughout the process were also focused on providing quality feedback and reducing the skepticism with the process.

Integrating the Processes of Public Consultation and Policy Development

In order to have the consultation inform the policy under development, the public consultation process needed to be linked to and integrated with the policy development process throughout the overall process. To address this issue of integrating the two processes, the Department adopted several strategies. Through the analysis of the documents, the interview data, and field notes, the following approaches were identified:

- staffing strategy
- information management strategy
- coordination strategy, and
- communication strategy.

Staffing Strategy

There were a number of Department staff members who, at various points during this project, were assigned roles related to both the consultation and the policy development processes. The assignments included combinations of the following: planning for the consultation; assisting with the roles of recorder and resource persons during the consultations; researching various policy options; preparing theme papers or other background documents; or writing and editing sections of the Draft White Paper and/or the White Paper. By undertaking a variety of roles, individual staff members were involved in activities which assisted with the integration of the processes.

Information Management Strategy

Elements of the information management strategy have been previously referred to in some detail. The information was gathered through various aspects of the consultation, including Round 1 open forums, written submissions, the Budget Roundtable discussion groups, Round 2 discussion groups, or the various stakeholder consultations and reviews undertaken by the Department. The information was entered into a computerized database and, with the assistance of a software program, the text was analyzed to provide themes from the various aspects of the consultation.

The information was provided in a timely manner to those Department individuals who were involved in preparing theme papers and in writing components of the Draft and then the White Paper. There were references from the interviews to the high quality of the information provided through the analysis. As well, there were references to the timeliness of the information, especially when deadlines and the pressures of time were felt by both planners and participants during this process. Throughout the project, information was shared between the processes in a two-way, back and forth fashion.

Coordination Strategy

The *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project had, throughout its time frame, multiple activities and processes underway concurrently. The coordination of the project required the leadership and involvement of senior members of the Department. The Deputy Minister provided strong leadership in linking the elements of the processes together.

Many Department members commented on the role the Deputy Minister played in providing leadership to the overall process. One member reflected on her leadership and the relationship between the two processes of consultation and policy development with these comments:

> The only reason that we have any change at all or any legitimacy through this entire process is the role that the Deputy [Minister] played. She was the one who recognized the need for change, she was the one who recognized the need for public involvement, and she was the one who managed the process in such a way that first, change was not stifled, and second, that the public had a role to play in that whole process.
>
> There is no natural affinity at all between the consultative process and the policy process. None whatsoever. It is an unnatural alliance. You have to have some sort of powerful will to hold that together. . . . [The Deputy] held up the policy process awaiting the results of the consultation; she accelerated the consultation to make sure that it kept in tune with the policy process. She ran interference for us within the government right through to the Provincial Treasurer [on the business plan]. (IN0PP: 384-

396)

The role of leadership and the importance of linking or integrating the two processes was also noted by another Department member.

> The consultation process and the policy process had to be consciously linked--and they were. They were consciously linked from the very top. [Among the] key pieces of advice that [we] could give anybody embarking on a consultation would be to get support right from the top and to ensure that the consultation process and the policy process were linked. The information went back and forth [between the two processes] the whole time but we had to consciously do it [move the information back and forth]. (IN0QQ: 430-437)

Coordination was also provided through the structure of committees established for the project. The Steering Committee, the Operations Committee, and the project Secretariat each had a number of specific activities and provided for the coordination of those within their role. At certain points of the project, it was less clear how the development of strategic options and the Options Paper would integrate into the project. The fact that there was two planning groups for consultation processes--one for Round 1 and Round 2 and another for the July Fiscal Planning Workshop and the Budget Roundtable--created tension around coordination for much of the project time frame.

Communication Strategy

Communications plans were prepared for internal and external communications purposes. During the consultation it was particularly important to ensure that staff members across the Department were informed both about the activities in the various communities and of the process overall, especially when the majority of participants in Round 1 indicated that they had learned about the consultation through a Department contact. There was an internal newsletter for the project and information on the process was frequently distributed by fax. Little use was made of electronic means of distributing or receiving information as this medium was still early in its availability and use throughout the government network. News releases were prepared and distributed through the media to announce important decisions or activities related to the *Adult Learning: Access*

Through Innovation project.

The project newsletter, *Keeping You Informed,* which included the "What We Heard" column, was produced through the Department's Communications branch. This presented information on the consultation process in a new style, providing feedback on submissions and presentations received by the Department, as well as outlining the next steps and providing an update on the process as it evolved. The style and content of the newsletters were intended in part to increase the confidence in the consultation process and to reduce the skepticism with its legitimacy as a process.

Consultation documents were developed for each phase of the consultation and were widely distributed to both participants of the consultation sessions and to stakeholders and the public at large. The documents for Round 1 provided background information as well as outlined the challenges and issues facing the system. A workbook was prepared for the Budget Roundtable to focus on financial information as well as strategic options for review and discussion. The Draft White Paper was prepared for Round 2 of the consultations to present goals and strategies for consideration. Finally, the White Paper, outlining the policy framework and strategies, was released and distributed.

Research Question #4:
In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?

Through an analysis of the data, the consultation process was noted to affect the policy process in a number of ways. These findings were supported through the data gathered from interviews, documents and records, and observations. The following effects were noted and will be discussed:

- enhanced communication between and among policy makers and stakeholders
- broadened views held of policy issues
- moderated perspectives on policy issues
- modified outcomes for policy choices

- increased profile for the policy process, and
- intensified complexity of the policy arena.

Enhanced Communication

Throughout this project, the level of communications generally increased in quantity and quality between and among both policy and consultation planners and stakeholders participating through the various consultation activities. The Department structured several committees as part of this project and the planning in the earlier amalgamated Departments to research, coordinate, and plan activities related to both the consultation and policy processes. Work accomplished through these committees contributed to enhancing communication among these Department staff members.

Early in the process, the Department of Advanced Education initiated the "dog and pony" show sessions with the post secondary institutions. These sessions presented an overview of trends and issues as well as fiscal projections for the system. While these sessions helped to act as awareness building activities, they also served to sharpen the focus and the discussion on the issues facing institutions and the system. Many individuals within those institutions participated in follow up discussions related to the future trends and issues.

The Department adopted a variety of approaches and techniques as part of their overall communications strategy with key stakeholders and the public. The Department members incorporated at least the following approaches in which they would:

- prepare and distribute background papers for discussion within the system
- develop presentations to and discussions with staff members of the post secondary institutions
- request written submissions on issues from the post secondary institutions
- provide new releases on consultation and policy through the media
- invite institutional leaders to participate in budget related discussions
- distribute consultation documents to stakeholders and the public for each phase of consultation

- invite a broader base of stakeholders to participate in the consultation activities
- facilitate discussions through new forums, such as regional consultation sessions, the Budget Roundtable, and the consultation on the Draft White Paper
- solicit written submissions for Round 1 and 2 consultations
- provide written summaries for the consultation activities through reports, and
- create newsletters to update stakeholders and the public on the consultations.

Many of these communication techniques had been used by the Department in the past. The key difference occurred with the introduction of the three major consultation activities (Round 1, the Budget Roundtable, and Round 2) and the invitation of a broader base of stakeholders to participate in those activities. As anticipated few new policy ideas surfaced through those discussions (IN01, IN02, IN06, and IN15). However, generally the consultation sessions served to focus the discussion on issues and on the future of adult learning. These new forums created the occasion for debate and discussion. Through facilitation, a dialogue on the issues occurred in some of the sessions (IN02, IN08, IN09, IN10, IN11, IN14, and IN28). One Department member offered the following summary:

> You really started to get some real dialogue and people started to change their positions because they were influenced by who else was at the table. And that is where consultation starts to affect the policy process. It is no longer one--a whole collection of just data that comes from a specific interest--but it is the collective. . . . That dialogue pulled things together and changed things more than a single voice or many voices with a single message. (INAB: 723-743)

Broadened Views Held of Policy Issues

The communications approaches and the consultation activities undertaken contributed to increasing the awareness of the policy issues under consideration. The consultation documents provided the background information many individuals needed to assist with better understanding the issues. These documents were widely distributed and were used as the basis for the presentations and discussions in the consultation sessions.

During Round 1 of the consultation many individuals and organizations took the opportunity to make a presentation to the Department. The focus of these many presentations varied considerably but most contributed to the way in which issues were defined and understood in this policy process. An important aspect of review during the policy process is to go beyond identifying the issues and to work to understand the issues. One Department member illustrated how the consultation sessions contributed to the Department's understanding of issues.

> The public consultation process provided a forum that the public had not had in responding to what the government thought the issues were. [The consultation] provided a perspective that. . . may not have been reflected in the original document. The example: we thought about access as a problem mainly of the universities. But indeed, access was a problem for people who couldn't get into the system at all--whether it was at the AVC or [other institutions]. It became obvious that there were people in the society that when you said the word "access" it meant something quite differently to them. And that is a beautiful example of how the perspective was broadened by the consultation process. (IN04: 89-98)

Preparing to participate in the consultation process also contributed to developing a better understanding of the policy issues. One community stakeholder commented on the benefit of this preparation phase:

> The whole process of getting to the presentation made us really think solidly about what was important and what were the important issues. . . . The barrier for a lot of people was that they didn't know how to do this. They didn't know how to prepare [the written submission for Round 1]. . . . People said, "I don't know where to start, I have never done this before". (INAC: 229-240)

This perspective regarding how to think about the issues and the need to learn how to participate in this process was echoed by another community stakeholder:

> We need to prepare [the public] to take part in this kind of a process and we also need to have people who are critical thinkers who are aware of civics and the political process. . . . As difficult as it is for me to give any cudos to the present government, I am very glad that they have consulted. I think the process was a flawed one but I think that it was a step in the right direction. It was a start and as a society we have to learn how to do this better. And as individuals we have to learn how to participate better. (IN21: 382-415)

Moderated Perspectives of the Policy Options

Participation in the consultation sessions did seem to affect the collective perspective on issues. In his column in the final newsletter for the project, the Moderator pointed out that the written submissions tended to reflect individual perspectives and that these often differed from the perspectives offered at the discussion table *(Keeping You Informed*, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, Summer). The perspectives were often moderated and reframed through discussion and dialogue in the consultation sessions to produce a different collective view.

Other Department members spoke of the shift in perspective that occurred for some stakeholders during the consultation sessions on certain issues.

> I remember the most explicit thing--but certainly not the only thing--would be the non-resident tuition. I had several businessmen come up to me afterwards and tell me that they had actually changed their mind. They had started out from the position that "we ought to be charging these foreign students full costs and maybe even making a profit". [And had changed] to a view that "there are benefits to having these students come here that I didn't realize". So that is something quite explicit. (IN0SS: 186-192)

A community stakeholder also spoke of the value of discussions and the consultations in assisting with understanding of the issues and strategies:

> There were still a lot of people who really didn't understand the implications. A lot of people--myself included--I went home and revised my letter of response to the Draft White Paper after I had been involved in all these various discussions. There is a lot of value in talking among your peers--because you look at it from a variety of perspectives that you don't in isolation. (IN19: 199-204)

Changes in understanding also occurred in the Department perspective. One Department member described the outcome in this way:

> What the consultation didn't do was to lay new strategic thought on the table. Most of the strategic thinking, the ideas on the table, were ideas that arose out of the Department's own internal somewhat messy process. I can't think of a single significant new idea that arose during those consultations. . . but I do think that the way we saw those ideas and the way they were shaped and coloured in the end were significantly affected [by the consultation]. I think it was a very good thing. (IN0TT: 337-363)

A Department member reflected from a Department perspective on the influence that the public consultation process had on clarifying the issues.

> The workbook [for the Budget Roundtable] was a key document but it would have been very difficult [to develop] if we had not gone through some of the earlier processes putting together the purple package [that is, the Round 1 consultation documents]. You know we went around that and around it and I think we developed a much clearer sense of what the real issues were out of that. (IN0VV: 402-406)

Other factors within the consultation process had an influence on the outcomes. The earlier amalgamation of Departments had brought together various interests within one department. All branches in the Department had contributed to identifying potential stakeholders to participate in the process and this influenced in part the development of the broader base of stakeholders that were invited to the consultations. A Department member from the former Advanced Education Department reflected on this influence:

> This is also an important consideration. I think that sometimes the Career Development staff members feel that the process did finally get overridden by public post secondary concerns. But I would say that from my perspective that the amalgamation and then the employment and labour market interests of Career Development significantly altered the final product. A very important influence. [We] have had battles over the post secondary influence here but that final document is much more labour market oriented than it would ever have been had it come out of the old Advanced Education. And I think appropriately. I don't have any problems with it. (IN0UU: 352-359)

Modified Outcomes for Policy Choices

The Department did seem to be "listening" to the discussions in the consultation and roundtable sessions. A Department member reflected on some of the options that had been offered for consideration and the reactions.

> Well there were a lot of things that changed in terms of outcomes. One that readily comes to mind is that we talked about regional boards at the very beginning; we talked about amalgamating institutions; and creating centres of specialization and [we] certainly got a strong negative reaction to that so we backed off and changed our strategy in that area.
>
> [We proposed] that government should get out of regulating tuition and tried to push in that direction. . . that the institutions should be

> responsible to students rather than having the government as sort of the middle man. But to date there doesn't seem to be enough trust between students and Boards for that to happen. So even though we put out a relatively deregulated environment, by the time we wound up we were back where we were with just changing some numbers. (IN0WW: 166-180)

One institutional representative reflected on the process overall in this way:

> Over a 18-month period there at least was an opportunity to put forth one's comments and to discuss and bring out ideas. That did leave people with a positive feeling; you had your opportunity. Now maybe the outcome wasn't quite as people might have envisioned but that has been the nature of the process. I think that people were pleased to have the opportunity. I certainly enjoyed being involved in it. It didn't go quite as far as I thought it might have. . . what they provided is a framework for future policy development. (IN16: 414-425)

These consultations provided the Department with the opportunity to "float" some options and to get feedback from stakeholders and the public. The consultation documents for Round 1, the Budget Roundtable workbook, and the Draft White Paper all offered options for consideration and some insights into the "Department's thinking" on future policy directions. The Department's feedback loop to and from stakeholders provided an important influence in modifying the outcomes of the policy choices.

Increased Profile for the Policy Process

The consultation process added a public dimension to the planning of policy. Although public consultation in this fashion was somewhat new for the Department, it was seen by all the Department staff members whom I interviewed as valuable and to have influenced the policy process.

> Clearly the Department didn't start with a blank sheet of paper. And the Department was not unwise enough to believe that the consultation would throw up a whole range of wonderful new ideas that would fit together in a pattern and the rest of it. In my view, the Department had an obligation to try and express as clearly as possible what it saw as the challenges and possible way of responding to those challenges with a set of ideas and strategies to change the system.

> The public consultation was invaluable. It was something the Department hadn't done before in such a high profile and systematic way. It was very important to give people the opportunity to comment on the ideas, to react to them and to present their own ideas. Clearly there were very different interests involved. It is a very complex system.
>
> We believe that the contribution in both Rounds enabled the Department to test the waters, to see if the ideas we were putting out there were going to be validated by people who are obviously interested in the issues.
>
> It was also an opportunity for people to come up with their own ideas. I saw that as useful but it wasn't the main focus. The main focus was to get a good systematic discussion of a set of draft proposals from the Department. And they were good discussions. (IN0XX: 121-138]

This public visibility of the process and the discussion forums also created a pressure for the Department that was not there with an internal policy process. One Department member reflected on this aspect of the process:

> Public consultation forced us to articulate and defend our ideas and that was also extremely important. . . . . Very significant for us to go through that process from my point of view. . . . You can get there through a strategic planning process but a public process forces you to that--that kind of pressure was very different than if we had been doing an internal planning document. (IN0YY: 364-417)

This consultation process reflected a new approach by the Department toward public consultation. The base of involvement had been broadened considerably over previous key stakeholder consultations, such as the July Fiscal Planning Workshop. Department staff members had worked diligently to gather together participants who would have both a stake in the policy discussions and would help to facilitate real change in the system. One Department member commented:

> We had a lot of the opinion makers [at the consultations]--people who were respected in their communities. . . . They were people that the community looked to as caring and intelligent. People who were prepared to do something . . . We had business people who had totally changed their minds on points because they had had a chance to sit in a room and talk to some students and to some institutional people. I think it was a learning experience for everybody. . . and the waves go out from that learning. (IN0ZZ: 487-503)

This perception of expanding the base for consultation was noted by one of the institutional representatives:

> There was much more of a sense that this was "going public"--that [the Department] were not just going to listen to the direct stakeholders but [were there to] look at the broader picture. . . . I think they heard from people they hadn't heard from before and that was good. I somehow have the feeling that they didn't get strong unanimity from the various groups about some of the major changes that [the Department] thought might be an outcome of this process. I believe that they did think that there would be a reduction in the number of institutions, and some of that rationalization, and that they would get strong support for it. And [the support] wasn't there. [The issue] came up but [the support] wasn't there. (IN16: 304-317)

Intensified Complexity of the Policy Arena

The policy development process of the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development increased in complexity with the introduction of the public consultation process. This was particularly so given the scope and duration of the consultation process. The high level of public involvement in these processes in 1993-94 only added to the expectations and the complexity.

As presented earlier through my findings, this case had multiple processes which were underway over a lengthy period of time; many of the processes were overlapping, iterative, and concurrent. The introduction of the budget consultations added significantly to the complexity of the overall process. The budget consultations were required by government of all departments. The timing of those consultations and the development of the business plan was seen by many to seriously threaten the integrity of the public consultation process which the Department had just begun. The eventual alignment of the budget consultation with the public consultation process allowed the Department to present strategic options. The resulting feedback from the budget consultation significantly influenced the development of both the business plan and the White Paper.

The government introduction of the Standing Policy Committee structure also greatly changed the policy approval process within government (IN05, IN06, IN08, IN13, IN14, IN20, IN23, and IN26). The Minister and the Department chose to invite and involve elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who sat on the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning and as well as some MLAs who were members of the Opposition to participate in the Round 2 consultation on the Draft White Paper. This helped to introduce them to the policy issues surrounding the future of the adult learning system and to facilitate their understanding of those issues and the policy framework being proposed.

Research Question #5:
What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?

In gathering data for this study, the interviewees were asked their views of policy development in the 1990s. Their responses provide a consistent perspective of expectations for the policy development process in the near future. Their comments were based in the experience of the policy development and consultation processes for the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development as outlined in this case.

Continued Consultation

All internal government respondents stated that consultation would now be a part of the policy development process for this Department. The Minister had provided a commitment to ongoing consultation by identifying the Minister's Forum on Adult Learning as a major strategy of the White Paper (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, October). It was clear that many in the Department viewed the policy and consultation processes studied for this case as dealing with major policy issues. They did not foresee consultation being sustained on such a grand scale as had been part of this process but recognized that it would be necessary to maintain those relationships developed through the consultation (IN09). They did, however, see consultation as an expected approach to policy development for the Department and saw that this would occur on a more focused basis for specific issues (IN02, IN03, IN05, IN06, IN09, IN20, IN26, and IN28). Although consultation was seen to be now incorporated into the Department's approach to policy development, one Department member provided this realistic reminder:

> [As a government] we will consult as long as it is convenient to do so. We will manage our consulting differently although we may still call it that when the government is no longer prepared to listen. We will always talk about consultation but we do it as long as it is comfortable and convenient. We will not do it when we see no purpose. (INAD: 291-294)

One interviewee offered these comments from the government perspective of a policy maker:

> We think differently; we do everything differently; we are much more transparent. We have come to realize that it is healthy to have the public involved. . . . I don't think there is any question that we have [created an expectation for a certain level of consultation to occur]. . . . The days of top down policy making are gone for the foreseeable future. Unquestionably, we have a new style of politics. (INAE: 193- 26)

Increased Inclusiveness

Another characteristic of policy development which received comment was increased inclusiveness. The policy making process is now thought to be less elitist and less top down in approach. This shift to inclusiveness is seen, however, to have contributed other characteristics to the process and has made the process more political and somewhat messy.

> It is not top down anymore. Some of it is really messy--you look at it and you feel like you have got an internal inconsistency. We have a beauty in our paper--on one hand, we are telling institutions that they have to be competitive and the most effective and efficient is going to win; on the other hand, we are telling people that they have to rationalize and work together in partnerships. That is a huge inconsistency. But in a public consultation process. . . you have to deal with that messiness.
>
> I think that [policy making] has become far more politicized--which is part of it not being an elite group that develops the policy. Historically, there has not been that grass roots involvement of MLAs at the front end. In our public consultation. . . we involved and invited MLAs. It is a far more inclusive process compared to what it used to be. Very very different now. (INAG: 356-389)

Increased Complexity

Some interviewees also commented on what they observed to be other characteristics of policy making in the 1990s. One characteristic noted was that of increased complexity.

> [Policy making] has become much more complex. The world has become much more complex. And you just can't isolate something anymore. We spend more time talking to our colleagues in other Departments these days than I can ever remember. . . we should be doing more because everything now is really interconnected. (INAF: 342-348)

Focus on Outcomes

As part of planning this consultation process, the Operations Committee and the Steering Committee had spent considerable time and effort in drafting objectives for the consultation process. This focus on generating clear goals and objectives for the policy development and consultation process surfaced in discussions with interviewees within the Department (IN02, IN03, IN05, and IN28). One member reiterated the significance of understanding what you want to accomplish through the process. For that individual, clear objectives and outcomes will continue to be an important characteristic for the policy making process.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Another Department member identified the need for greater flexibility and adaptability in the processes as an important characteristic for policy making in the 1990s. The processes are being examined and adapted to fit specific circumstances.

> We are really in a time when people are going to be experimenting. We took some of the Toward 2000 consultative processes and then made it our own. Now. . . [others] are looking at what we are doing. . . and adapting it for their own use. They have looked at our processes carefully and tried to capture some of the things from it--but it doesn't look like ours. They've taken it and adapted it to themselves and they have added things that we wouldn't do. We need a lot of flexibility and we have to do things differently. (INAH: 382-390)

Public Involvement

Both the community stakeholders as well as Department staff members thought consultation would continue as a characteristic of policy development in the 1990s because of the importance of involving people in decisions that affect them. One community stakeholder phrased it this way:

> I think the public is going to demand participation more and more. It is like setting a new modus operandi--there is a whole new level and a whole new standard expected. So--yes . . . [the public] is going to demand participation or they will just simply get involved and make some statements. (IN22: 226-233)

Another community perspective was echoed with these comments:

> For many this was a new experience to be directly involved to this extent in discussions around the development of a policy paper . . . I think that people do want to be consulted. I think that there is a real question about how that [consultation] happens, and about what [they are consulted on]. And what kind of an effect it ought to have. (IN21: 267-276)

Summary

The data from this research study have been presented in this chapter to address the research questions for the study. An analysis of the data identified many aspects of the policy development process as well as sets of events which portrayed three public consultation activities within the case: the Round 1 Consultation, the Budget Roundtable, and the Round 2 Consultation. These data were presented in a chronological format within three time blocks which illustrated the interactions between the consultation and policy processes as well as the complexity of the case overall.

From the analysis of the data, four sets of process issues were evident during the planning of the processes and which continued to be present throughout the consultation process. These issues focused on the following issues:

- developing the relationship between the consultation and policy processes
- aligning the Budget Roundtable with the public consultation process
- maintaining the credibility of the public consultation process, and

•integrating the processes of public consultation and policy development.

Based on an analysis of the date gathered from interviews, documents and records, and observations, the consultation process affected the policy process in the following ways:

•enhanced communication between and among policy makers and stakeholders

•broadened views held by individual of policy issues

•moderated perspectives of individuals on policy issues

•increased the profile for the policy process, and

•intensified the complexity of the policy arena.

Finally, the chapter concluded by presenting the expectations for the policy development process based on the perspectives of participants in this study. These individuals predicted that policy development would be characterized by continued consultation, increased inclusiveness, increased complexity, a focus on outcomes, greater flexibility and adaptability, and continued public involvement.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the research study by presenting a discussion of the findings of this study. A comment is provided as a reflection on the research methodology used. The chapter closes with the conclusions of the study, the identification of the study's major contributions to knowledge, and some implications for practice and future research.

An Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the process of developing a policy framework for the White Paper released by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in October 1994. During this study, particular attention was paid to the contribution of public consultation to the process. A secondary purpose of this study was to contribute to knowledge about the consultation and policy processes.

Research Questions

This qualitative study addressed the following general question:

> *What was the process undertaken by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development to develop the 1994 White Paper?*

The following specific research questions guided the study:

1. *How was policy development structured for this process?*

2. *How was public consultation structured for this process?*

3. *What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?*

4. *In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?*

5. *What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?*

Research Design and Methodology

A qualitative case study research strategy was selected for this study. Three major streams of activities were incorporated within the design of the study which, though sequenced, were concurrent at many times during the study. One activity stream encompassed the review of the literature in the domains of policy studies and qualitative inquiry. An initial review of the policy literature provided the background for the development of the research proposal for this study. Once the analysis of the data was begun and patterns began to emerge from the data, the policy literature was explored further. The qualitative inquiry continued throughout the study to inform the methodology and procedures.

A second stream of activity involved the collection of data over a 24-month period. The methods used included interviewing, observing, analyzing documents and records, and recording field notes. Interviews were held with 13 individuals internal to government and with eight individuals external to government. Some individuals were interviewed on more than one occasion. Twenty-five interviews were conducted overall.

The third stream of activity focused on data analysis which overlapped with and was integrated throughout the data collection. Further analysis and interpretation were undertaken during the completion of writing the dissertation at a later time.

Discussion

This discussion places the findings of this research study within the context of the research questions and the literature review presented earlier in this document. A further review of the literature was undertaken during and following the analysis of the data from the study. Some of the literature had not been available prior to or during the data collection for this study as the literature was published near or after that period of time. This literature did contribute to the analysis of the data and is reflected in the discussion of the findings of the research questions that follows here.

Research Question #1:
How was policy development structured for this process?

Interviews, documents, and records were used to provide information and perceptions on how policy development was structured for this process. This section discusses the findings of this research question within the context of the policy literature.

The Stages Model

The literature review outlined the evolution of the "stages" models of policy development. These models describe a series of activities in the policy decision process. The stages models reflect a "conventional approach" to policy development involving a step-like process. The stages models, the rational-comprehensive models, and their limitations have been well discussed by several writers (Torgerson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Nakamura, 1987; Stone, 1988; Fischer, 1989; Majone, 1989; Doern & Phidd, 1992; Sabatier, 1992; Kingdon, 1995). There was little evidence in this research study to suggest that a rational or "conventional approach" was followed or that such an approach represented the view of planners of the policy decision process.

A Policy Development Cycle

In describing policy making, Kingdon (1984) indicated that public policy making could be considered as a set of processes (i.e., setting the agenda, specify the alternatives, authoritative choice, and implementation) rather than a single process. He viewed the processes as separate and cautioned that success in one process did not necessarily imply success in others. My reconstruction of the case supported Kingdon's view that not one but rather several policy processes focused on at least the following aspects of policy development: policy review, policy options, policy choice, and policy implementation.

Doern and Phidd (1992) observed that a policy problem does, indeed, go through the phases of identification, definition, alternative search, choice, implementation, and evaluation. The policy issues and the policy solutions in this research study were seen to migrate through processes from identification through to policy choice and some to policy implementation.

Although the policy process in this study was not seen to follow a rational, stages, or linear model, the policy issues and policy solutions in this case did, however, migrate through various aspects of policy development which could be viewed as consisting of a set of processes, each with its own activities and dynamics. These processes were fluid, interactive, iterative, overlapping, dynamic, and sometimes "messy." The findings of this study support a representation of the set of processes, albeit more logical than in reality, as a policy development cycle comprising policy review, policy options, policy choice, and policy implementation processes.

Strategic Vision

The Divisional Task Force suffered from a lack of direction for its work, in part because the Department had not agreed upon a "vision" or future for their policy development and strategic options. Mintzberg (1994) discussed various approaches to the creation of strategy including a formal planning approach, a visionary approach, and a learning approach. He indicated that vision sets the broad outlines of strategy while leaving the specific details to be worked out. The learning approach is one in which the organization experiments and integrates to adapt to change. In his view, all three approaches can and must work in concert for an organization to be effective. He considered, however, that an overemphasis on formal planning tended to drive out the other two approaches, "and with the disappearance of the visionary approach goes vision itself, [and] broad integrated strategic perspectives get reduced to narrow, decomposed strategic positions" (p. 209).

The approach taken by the Divisional Task Force lacked both a vision and a framework from which to proceed. The outcome was a Task Force report which identified many issues (policy problems) facing the system and provided a lengthy list of strategic actions (policy proposals) to consider. While the Task Force did not present an integrated policy framework, the report identified issues and solutions that would continue to "float around" in discussions within the Department for the next year or more.

Producing Policy-relevant Information

One outcome of each process in the policy cycle is policy-relevant information. The value of the work undertaken by the Divisional Task Force actually lay in the fact that a significant amount of background work was undertaken for the policy development process and the Task Force distilled many of the important policy issues facing the adult learning system. A list of strategic options was now available for discussion within the Department. Rist (1994b) emphasized the importance of having "phase-specific"policy material that is developed and made available to the appropriate decision makers at the appropriate time. He indicated that having policy "cycle-specific" information available in the system is not sufficient to ensure that the information will be used. The policy-relevant information produced helped to increase the awareness of key stakeholders of the policy issues and the need for policy change. The information also contributed to the policy development activities which followed this initial policy review process.

Political Context

By mid-December 1992, the Department was already launched into its work on policy development and had committed to public consultation in some form on the policy framework. Policy issues or problems and possible policy options had been listed in the report of the Divisional Task Force. The next six-month period saw significant political changes with government in the province, all of which affected the Department and its policy development process. These political activities and changes included the selection of a new party leader and Premier, the amalgamation of the Department of Advanced Education with the Department of Career Development and Employment, the appointment of a new Minister, the appointment of a Deputy Minister who was new to part of the Department, the introduction of the Standing Policy Committee structure, the requirement for three-year business plans and budget consultations for each Department, the introduction of a provincial budget plan for both expenditure and deficit reduction, and the call of a provincial election.

Transforming Policy-relevant Information

The processes that comprise the policy development cycle incorporate policy analytic methods which produce policy information, structure policy issues, forecast policy options, and recommend policy choices. Dunn (1981) defined policy analysis as "an applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems" (p. 34). Within each process of the policy development cycle, the policy-relevant information must be transformed, often through analysis and argument.

Majone (1989) put forward the view that policy analysis had less to do with formal techniques of problem solving than with the process of argument. In suggesting that good policy analysis was more than data analysis, he advanced the view that the process of argumentation and discourse make a contribution to the policy process. His claim for the contribution of argumentation can apply not only to public deliberation and consultation but also to the transformation of information within the policy development cycle.

The findings of this case indicate that argumentation and discourse played a role during the development of the policy options and the policy choices, because Department members were involved in a recurrent struggle with policy ideas or proposals and participated in many animated discussions. The Department members took part in lengthy debates and deliberations to articulate policy options and to match up strategies with policy goals during the development of the policy framework. This reflected the complexity of the process as well as the many considerations which impinge on the decision process in a political context.

Kingdon (1984) suggested that policy ideas float around within the organization and in a community of specialists. He indicated that ideas can gain prominence and then fade. There can often be a long process of "softening up" toward an idea. In this conceptualization, the creation of policy involves ideas confronting one another and combining with one another in various ways. Ideas can combine and recombine. For an idea to survive, Kingdon indicated that the policy proposals had to meet some criteria.

The findings of this study identified that many of the policy problems and policy solutions had been identified and had "been around" for some time. Various sources of input were considered during the development of policy options and choices: theme papers prepared from Round 1 and 2 information, written submissions from institutions and other stakeholders, background research and documents prepared within the Department, process reviews and assessments undertaken by Department staff and consultants, information from staff consultations, information from budget consultations, prior "Department thinking," Ministerial preferences and government policy directions, feedback from the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning, and fiscal resources and realities.

Dunn (1981) offered advice to policy analysts and researchers concerning the utilization of the outcomes of the policy analysis process. He indicated that there were many factors other than methodology which effect the utilization of policy analysis. His listing included the following: the structure of political power, the political feasibility of recommended alternatives, time and resource constraints, the form and content of information, and the characteristics of policy makers themselves (pp. 45-46). The findings of this research study indicate that several of these factors were considered during the transformation of the policy-relevant information into policy choice recommendations for the policy framework of the White Paper.

Problems, Proposals, and Politics

In describing his own research, Kingdon (1984) conceptualized policy making as involving three "streams" which flow through the organization: a problem stream of information consisting of policy problems; a solution stream of policy proposals floating about in the organization; and a political stream consisting of political activities and aspects. "At some critical juncture," according to Kingdon, "the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics" (p. 20). The political reality and the dynamic nature of the process described in this research study supports Kingdon's concept of policy making through the coupling of policy issues, policy options, and political activities and events. The *Adult Learning:*

Access Through Innovation project and the preparation of the White Paper created the "window of opportunity" for the policy choices in this policy making process.

Research Question #2:
How was public consultation structured for this process?

Data to provide information and perceptions on how public consultation was structured for this process were gathered through interviews, documents, records, and observations. The findings are presented within the context of the policy and consultation literature.

Increasing Consultation

By the mid-1980s the policy science literature included recommendations for greater participation and involvement by stakeholders in the policy development process. Kingdon (1984) had discussed the involvement of the policy community in the policy process. Lincoln and Guba (1986) urged policy analysts to interact with "stakeholding audiences" to discover their claims or concerns and to open up the policy process. deLeon (1992) noted that support for participation in the policy process was increasing as policy scholars presented a conceptual basis for broadening the involvement of relevant stakeholders in "participatory policy analysis."

Further, Majone (1989) wrote about the role of public deliberation and argumentation in policy making. He maintained that "argumentation is the key process through which citizens and policy makers arrive at moral judgements and policy choices. Public discussion mobilizes the knowledge, experience and interest of many people while focusing their attention on a limited range of issues" (p. 2).

Healy (1986) called for mutual consultation with those affected at all stages of the policy process. Benveniste (1989) recommended the integration of consultation with the policy process to provide policy analysts and implementers and beneficiaries with the opportunity to exchange information and to reach agreements.

By the early 1990s the calls for a broader base of participation in the policy process resulted in a significant increase in public consultation to assist with decision making and policy development (Patterson, Lohin, & Ferguson, 1992; Montgomerie, 1994; McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994). Patterson et al. indicated that consulting people was not a new idea, but noted that there was a growing prominence and frequency in consultation activities, particularly those that involved large numbers of participants (p. 2). People were being invited to participate in the decision making processes that affected them. An examination of policy development for postsecondary education as undertaken by provincial governments across Canada in the early 1990s indicated that consultation in its many forms played a role as a strategy contributing to the process.

The calls for greater involvement and participation of policy communities and stakeholders in the policy process were matched by the interest of stakeholders and the general public to become involved and to contribute to decisions which affected them. By the early 1990s there was evidence of a growing trend to incorporate consultation into policy development activities.

Stakeholder Participation in Policy Development

The consultation process in this case was seen by many of the stakeholders as a new process and some were not sure about how to participate effectively in the process. Many stakeholders viewed the process with skepticism. The open forums were seen by the stakeholders as an opportunity for input but many questioned the actual impact that their input might have on policy decisions. Common questions across the stakeholder groups were as follows: Is the government really listening? Will our input make any difference? and Are the decisions already made?

Patterson et al. (1992) advised that the choice of consultation methods must consider the combination of expectations, mandates, and skills of the potential participants in the process. They also recommended that mangers and policy analysts be careful to do more than "intend to listen." The authors reiterated that the managers must ensure that they are truly open to hearing other views and must be clear about what will happen with the results of the consultation. They indicated that failure to do so may only increase cynicism among the participants.

The policy process in this case was internal to the organization while the consultation process was external to the organization or, at least, to the policy development unit. Consultation may be appropriate with each and all of the various processes in the policy development cycle. The consultation design in this case study called for multiple consultations and utilized a combination of consultation methods. The design facilitated a large number of stakeholders and the public to participate in the process. Planning multiple consultation activities, using interactive consultation methods, and maintaining continuity with the stakeholder participant group contributed to building relationships with a network of stakeholders over time.

Research Question #3:
What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?

An analysis of the data gathered through the interviews, documents, records, and observations identified some of the emerging issues with the consultation process. Four issues from this study are discussed in the context of the consultation literature which was located late into the data analysis for this study.

Issues With the Consultation Process

The following process issues were identified from the data: developing the relationship between the consultation and the policy processes; aligning the budget consultation with the public consultation process; maintaining the credibility of the public consultation process; and integrating the processes of public consultation and policy development. These issues are specific to this Alberta case and have been presented in a fashion that is based on the data. These reflect the tensions around the introduction and management of the processes and the confounding influence of the overlay of the business planning and budget consultation process onto the public consultation and policy development processes.

The process issues in this study are, however, clearly related to the issues or areas of importance identified by Patterson et al. (1992) for consideration in planning consultation to enhance decisions: clarifying the objectives of consultation and ensure that participants understand why they are being consulted; maintaining the relationship between the consultation objectives and the overall decision making strategy; designing consultations that fulfill the consultation objectives; and aligning strategy, leadership, and organizational culture.

Both the case and the literature support the conclusion that key areas for consideration in effective consultation planning include specifying the relationship between the consultation strategy and the overall policy decision strategy, developing clear objectives for the consultation, designing the consultations to achieve the consultation objectives, and aligning strategies and leadership to ensure the integration of the consultation process with the policy development process.

Consultation and Policy Processes

Multiple consultations were examined in this study. Although activities such as the July Fiscal Planning Workshop and the Budget Roundtable were designed for budget consultation purposes, they also contributed to the policy consultation process. Consultation activities listed below were designed to complement the processes within the policy development cycle:

•*Policy Review* process: •the institutional meetings,
•the July Fiscal Planning Workshop, and
•the Round 1 consultations

•*Policy Options* process: •the Budget Roundtable, and
•*Policy Choice* process: •the Round 2 consultations.

A frequent downfall of public consultation identified in the literature is the failure to adequately identify the decision that needs to be made and to anticipate how public input will be brought into the decision. In this case, the analysis of the consultation information was used in the development of theme papers which contributed to the preparation of the Draft White Paper and later to the White Paper. However, the planners in this study did grapple for some time with the issue of how to incorporate the information from the consultations into the policy development process.

Consultation Objectives

In this study, a Statement of Objectives was drafted for the consultation process by the committees which were part of the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* structure. The consultation strategy chosen called for multiple consultations. This Statement outlined the purpose of the project and the objectives and outcomes for Round 1 and Round 2 of the consultation. The budget consultation was later added into the process and the objectives for Round 2 were revised as the plans evolved. The committee members struggled with an evolving plan and time line for the consultations, and the Statement of Objectives was still in a draft format six months into the planning process. The objectives were developed as the planning process proceeded and were not prepared in advance of the earlier portions of the planning process. Nevertheless, interviewees from the Department indicated that these objectives were used throughout the process to provide a frame of reference for their work. The purpose of each of the consultation activities was communicated to the public and stakeholders through the newsletters and the consultation documents.

Consultation Design and Objectives

Patterson et al. (1992) stated that consultation in some form may be appropriate in any or every phase of the decision making process. However, they emphasized that each consultation must have a strategic purpose. The design of the consultation strategy in this study included multiple consultations; one was designed as an open consultation while others were invited consultations. The findings of this study indicated that a wide variety of consultation methods or techniques were incorporated into the design throughout the process.

The objectives for open consultations for Round 1 were to inform and educate the public and to also provide a forum to gather their views. The methods selected for this consultation were appropriate for this purpose. The format worked well when a small and manageable number of individuals attended the sessions and a dialogue on the topics could take place. In the large urban centres, the format was formal and tended to emphasize one-way presentations rather than dialogue. Few of those attending those urban sessions stayed for the duration of the presentations.

For the consultations of the Budget Roundtable and Round 2, an invited group of stakeholders participated in sessions over two days. The design of these sessions incorporated both facilitated discussion groups and plenary sessions. These interactive methods were quite appropriate to focus the discussion on issues and options, to promote dialogue among the participants, and to provide feedback to the Department. The planners worked to improve the process for the Round 2 sessions based on the experience of conducting the Budget Roundtable.

Patterson et al. (1992) indicated that interactive consultation is useful when "the issue does not have a clear cut or legal solution, is high profile or contentious . . . or involves transferring authority and accountability from one organization to another" (p. 24). The public consultations in this case met these criteria and, thus, the use of interactive consultation strategies was quite appropriate. The design which included both open and invited consultations and incorporated a variety of consultation methods provided the opportunity for a large number of stakeholders and the general public to participate in the process.

Aligning Strategy and Leadership

Several writers have emphasized the importance of having the commitment and support from the senior managers or leaders for the public consultation process undertaken by an organization (McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994; Mintzberg, 1994; Patterson et al., 1992). The necessity for the organization to dedicate people and resources to the consultation effort has been underscored in the literature. Authors such as Reich (1988b) and Benveniste (1989) cautioned that consultation is very consuming of time and resources and that the process can cycle out of control. Benveniste also emphasized that the consultation process requires open disclosure of information. For these reasons, these writers indicated that the process is one that managers and political actors do not always enjoy or find comfortable because they can lose control of the situation. Reich reiterated the need for involving skilled professionals to plan and implement the consultation. Benveniste pointed out, however, that many managers lack the training and the necessary skills in this area of expertise.

Significant resources were committed to the consultation process and the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project overall. A project coordinator was designated, external consultants were contracted, and numerous Department members were assigned responsibilities related to both the public consultation process as well as the policy development process. External consultants were contracted to assist with the consultation process because Department members lacked expertise and experience with this broad concept of consultation. Senior members of the Department participated actively in all of the consultation activities. This provided the opportunity for them to hear messages first hand and to convey to the public and stakeholders the importance of the process.

A specific organizational structure was adopted for the *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* project. Terms of reference were written for each of the Steering Committee, the Operations Committee, and the Secretariat. The relationship of the various groups developing strategic policy options to this structure was not entirely clear. Several individuals who were involved as policy writers were linked with the project Secretariat. However, the actual recommendations for policy options were considered by the Corporate Management committee of the Department in a retreat setting and through their own meetings.

During the study several Department members commented on the role of the Deputy Minister in providing leadership and coordination to the policy development and consultations overall. She participated actively in all of the rounds of consultation and provided the necessary coordination to bring together the divergent components of the project and played a central role in the development of the policy framework.

Introduction of increased consultation to the decision processes and strategies of the Department represented a shift in practice and for the overall culture of the organization. The amalgamation of departments, coupled with this shift, created challenges in creating an organizational culture for this new Department. The data from the study indicated that the broad-based participation by staff members in the consultation process generally contributed to team building and to Department building.

The findings of this case and the literature indicate that planning and implementing effective consultation requires resources to support the activities as well as knowledge and expertise in consultation planning. The various roles and responsibilities required to undertake the planning and implementation need to be clearly defined. A structure to integrate the components is important to ensure that effort is directed to the design and management of the consultation. Strategies related to staffing, information management, communication, and coordination can be adopted to assist with the integration of the consultation and the policy processes. The commitment and support of organizational leaders are seen as an important factor in contributing to the success of the consultation process.

Research Question #4:
In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?

An analysis of the data gathered for this study addressed the research question regarding the ways in which the consultation process affects the policy process. Various effects of the consultation process on the policy process have been described throughout the discussion of the data. Recent writers on the consultation process, such as Lindquist (1991), Patterson et al. (1992), McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994), Montgomerie (1994), and Sterne (1997), described some of the effects or outcomes observed in this case study research.

This case and the literature support the following as a list of possible effects of the consultation process on the policy development process: enhanced communication among and between policy makers and stakeholders, broadened views of policy issues, reframed and moderated perspectives of policy options, modified outcomes for policy choices, increased the profile for the policy process, and added complexity for the policy arena.

Research Question #5:
What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?

An analysis of the literature indicated that the approaches to policy development have evolved considerably since the establishment of policy sciences by Harold Lasswell in the early 1950s. Recent conceptualizations propose emerging models which emphasize metaphors, evolutionary dynamics, chaotic fluctuations, autonomy, and spontaneous adjustments to address the complexities of the policy process (Dobuzinskis, 1992). There is a noted paradigm shift away from the rational technical models to ones that accommodate complexity and an evolutionary approach.

The analysis of the data generated from this study offered several characteristics for the process of policy development. The findings of this study indicate that the policy development process is characterized as more inclusive, complex, politicized, flexible and adaptable, demanding public involvement, and including ongoing consultation.

Consultation and Learning

Throughout this study there were repeated references to "learning" which came from both community stakeholders and Department members. Learning was described as occurring in three forms: individual learning through acquiring and processing new information; cooperative learning through mutual discussion and dialogue in consultation activities; and organizational learning through reflection and action in planning and implementing activities.

Individual Learning

The consultation documents served as valuable tools to support individual learning. Consultation materials, developed for each of the rounds of consultation, were widely distributed. They potentially contributed to the learning of individuals beyond just those who participated in the consultations in some fashion.

The scope of the consultation process and the dynamic level of activity related to the events created an atmosphere which contributed to the individual learning of many members of the Department. The Department had been recently amalgamated, its new identity was still evolving, and participation through the consultation contributed to the individual learning of its members.

Cooperative Learning

Many participants in this study commented on the "learning" which took place during consultations. Sabatier (1988) presented the concept of policy-oriented learning as "alterations of thought or behavioural intentions which result from experience and which are concerned with the attainment (or revision) or policy objectives" (p. 133). This policy-oriented learning was evident as an outcome of the discussion and dialogue at the consultation sessions.

Learning through cooperation, as proposed by Lindquist (1991), involves learning across groups and organizations. Cooperation entails the development of new relationships and the building of trust. For groups to embrace new strategic orientations and to acknowledge the validity of other perspectives represents, according to Lindquist, a form of double-loop learning. Majone (1989) promoted the use of public discourse to contribute to the policy development process through discussion as participants can move from holding individual points of view to developing a shared understanding of the policy issues. Reich (1988b) advocated discussion to contribute to civic discovery and public learning. Designing consultation sessions by incorporating interactive methods can facilitate this learning.

Organizational Learning

Argyris and Schon (1978) focused attention on the concept of organizational learning and outlined three levels of learning: single-loop learning, double-loop learning, and learning-to-learn. In this case study examples of both single-loop and double-loop learning were noted. An example of single-loop learning was provided by the planners gathering feedback from the consultation sessions and using that information to improve the consultation process for the next round. When planners reflected on the consultation process and policy process and changed the approach taken by the Department in consulting stakeholders and in using the information which came from the consultations, double-loop learning was occurring. The challenges related to the latter example created considerable tension within the Department.

Morgan (1986) offered the reminder that individual members think and act rather than organizations. Rist (1994b) also emphasized that organizational learning happens among individuals--and rarely among complete strangers. Organizational learning, according to Rist, is linked to the biographies of the individuals within an organization, to the culture of the organization, to the styles of decision making, and to the means of communication within the organization (p. 189). The potential exists, then, to incorporate considerations for learning into planning and designing consultation processes.

Reflections on Methodology

The choice of a qualitative case study as the research strategy was appropriate for this research study. As Yin (1989) presented in his definition of a case study strategy, this case study followed an empirical inquiry design accessing multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. In this case, as in the definition of the strategy, the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context were not clearly evident. The study offered many of the challenges, complexities, and rewards which can be part of an “on-the-ground” or a “close-in” organizational study.

The design for this study required access to individuals within the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development who were involved with planning and implementing the policy and consultation processes. The design also necessitated access to some of the Departmental records and documentation related to these processes. As well, to gain first-hand experience, I needed the opportunity to participate as an observer at the consultation activities. Obtaining this approval for this access required both formal and informal involvement with the Department over a period of more than seven months. Gentle persistence and demonstrated commitment were important aspects of my access strategy. Staff members of the Department of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development were helpful and willing to participate in this study once access had been approved. Based on my experience from this study, gaining access should be viewed as a process and not a single event; the process is one that necessitates the development of thoughtful plans and strategy.

The design of the study evolved throughout. Once access to the Department was granted and the research was underway, various components within the policy process and consultation process were identified. A review of records and documents in combination with the snowball technique allowed the participants for the study to emerge during my field work. All of the relevant and key stakeholders both internal and external to the Department were identified in this manner. Throughout the study, I tried to remain open to opportunities and information which would inform the study. The emergent nature of this study added greatly to the richness of the data gathered and to my understanding of the processes under study.

Much of the interview data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. As outlined in the literature on qualitative inquiry, this type of interview allows latitude for the interviewer to pursue a range of topics and for the respondents to shape the content of the interviews. This contributed to the quality of the data gathered and provided the opportunity to discover many facets of the processes under study. At the same time, the lack of a consistent structure from one interview to another added complexity to the task of analyzing the data from this study. All of the individuals interviewed could be considered by definition as "elites"(Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Interviewing elites for research studies often provides challenges for the researcher. These individuals brought to this study the broad perspectives and overviews which I wanted. To gain the benefit from these perspectives necessitated spending considerable time preparing for these interviews to ensure that as an interviewer I was knowledgeable of the context and had a sufficient understanding of the issues and topics under discussion.

The volume of data generated through this study underscored the importance of developing a data management plan. A complete set of data was maintained in a paper format. Much of the data was also maintained in computer files. A full verbatim transcript of each semi-structured interview was prepared. While this was time-consuming, it was extremely beneficial as it greatly assisted me in becoming familiar with the data. These transcripts became important during the latter phases of analysis when yet another review of the full transcripts provided new insights based on my own increased understanding of the case. The full transcripts also facilitated easy retrieval of segments of the interview data.

The analysis of this study revealed a complex set of processes, each with many facets. The individuals who were interviewed were involved in planning, implementing and participating in those processes. Their individual perspectives were influenced by their background, their role, and their experience with the processes. These perspectives provided both commonalities as well as differences. This research offered a vivid illustration of the multiple views of reality which are held by individuals who are involved with complex processes.

In reflecting on this case, there were multiple and overlapping organizational activities underway simultaneously within the Department in addition to the policy planning and consultation activities. While this may be a comment on reality in organizations of today, this increased the difficulty of isolating the specific activities and processes under study. Many of the processes studied were embedded within other organizational processes. Thus the presentation of the data in this document provides a logical reconstruction of events and activities as understood by me as the researcher.

A final comment on methodology is related to the use of "readers" in writing up this study. I used readers at two points in this study: to provide feedback on the case story and to provide feedback on the interview quotations presented in this document. In the first instance, six individuals who were familiar with the study were invited to read the draft of the case story from the perspective of completeness and clarity. Each brought a strong knowledge of different components of the processes under study. Their feedback was considered for subsequent revisions although decisions pertaining to the case story and the responsibility for the case story remained mine. In the second instance, a single individual who was familiar with the case and with many who had participated in the processes--those in the community as well as those internal to government--was invited to review the interview quotations in the document to determine if the sources were readily identifiable. For this task, a printout of the quotation excerpts as well as the draft text of the chapter which included the quotations in context was provided. Feedback from the reader was used to assist with honouring anonymity for the individuals who had participated in the study. The feedback did not identify any further changes.

Conclusions

During the 1990s there has been an increasing trend for consultation strategies to be incorporated into policy development activities and processes. The findings and conclusions from this research study are based on one case study which examined the process for the development of the policy framework for the 1994 White Paper by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. Particular attention has been paid to the contribution of consultation to the policy development process in this study.

This research presents a study of a case which was dynamic and which focused on major policy issues. The conclusions of this study address the specific research questions for this study and contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the process undertaken to develop the policy framework in the White Paper.

1. How was policy development structured for this process?

1.1 Policy development may be conceptualized as a policy cycle rather than as a linear, sequential process. The policy development cycle comprises a set of processes which address the following aspects of policy development: policy review, policy options, policy choice, and policy implementation. A fifth process of policy evaluation could be added to make the cycle more complete. Multiple policy cycles may be underway concurrently within an organization at any time.

1.2 The processes of the policy development cycle are interactive, overlapping, iterative, and dynamic. A policy issue will migrate through the various processes of the policy development cycle but each issue has its own dynamic and its own pace.

1.3 Policy analysis produces and transforms policy-relevant information. Producing the required policy-relevant information is necessary and essential preparation for the policy development process. Having appropriate policy information available to the appropriate decision makers during each specific policy process is an important factor in contributing to the utilization of the information in the development of policy choices and a policy framework.

1.4 Multiple factors and sources of input must be considered in the development of policy options and in recommending policy choices. The process of transforming policy-relevant information into policy options and policy choices often occurs through a process of analysis and argumentation. However, in a context influenced by political activity or events, the determination of policy choices can occur through the joining or coupling of identified policy issues with existing or reshaped ideas of policy options or solutions. The opening of a “window of opportunity” through political activity intensifies the conditions which support the creation of policy choices.

2. How was public consultation structured for this process?

2.1 The policy process is internal to the organization while the consultation process is external to the organization or, at least, to the policy development unit. Consultation may be appropriate to accompany each and all of the various processes in the policy development cycle. The consultation strategy may incorporate multiple consultations. Each consultation, however, requires a strategic purpose and must contribute to the policy decision process overall.

Various consultation methods and techniques are available to include within the design of the consultation.

2.2 The planning and implementation of consultation require the allocation of adequate resources, personnel with knowledge and expertise in consultative activities, defined roles and responsibilities, strategies to coordinate and integrate the consultation process with the policy development process, and the commitment and support of organizational leaders.

2.3 Stakeholders can make a valuable contribution to policy development through consultation. The use of a combination of methods in the consultation process will encourage and facilitate a broad basis of participation. Planning multiple consultation activities, using interactive consultation methods, and maintaining continuity with the stakeholder participant group is required to build a relationship with a network of stakeholders.

2.4 The design of the consultation strategy and the component activities can facilitate both individual and group learning. Documents developed for the consultations can support the design of the sessions as well as become tools to enhance policy-learning.

3. What were the emerging issues with the consultation process?

3.1 Key areas for attention in consultation planning include specifying the relationship between the consultation strategy and the overall policy decision strategy, developing clear objectives for the consultation, designing the consultations to achieve the consultation objectives, and aligning strategies and leadership to ensure the integration of the consultation process with the policy development process.

4. In what ways did the consultation process affect the policy process?

4.1 Consultation may affect the policy process in a variety of ways including the following: enhanced communication among and between policy makers and stakeholders, broadened views of policy issues, reframed and moderated perspectives of policy options, modified outcomes for policy choices, increased the profile for the policy process, and added complexity for the policy arena.

5. What were the emerging characteristics of the process of policy development?

5.1 Emerging conceptualizations of the policy development process may be characterized as inclusive, complex, politicized, flexible and adaptable, incorporating public or stakeholder involvement, and including ongoing consultation.

Implications of the Study

The following implications are based on the findings from this research study and on insights gained during conducting, analyzing, and writing up this study. They are presented as the contributions of this study to knowledge and as implications for practice and future research.

Contributions to Knowledge

1. This case study presents a comprehensive description and analysis of the public consultation process which contributed to the development of the policy framework for the 1994 White Paper by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. There is a paucity of Canadian-based literature addressing the role of consultation and its contribution to policy development. As such, this dissertation furthers our knowledge and understanding about public consultation and policy development in a Canadian context.

2. The analysis of this case provides evidence of an emerging approach to the policy development process which is evolutionary, dynamic, fluid, and at times, chaotic supporting the shift or trend as identified by Dobuzinskis (1992). Policy development in the political context examined in this case showed little evidence of being structured as a rational, sequential, or linear process. The findings of this study provide further support for Kingdon's (1984) conceptualization of policy making which joins policy problems, policy proposals, and political activities. The creation of a political "window of opportunity" for this policy development process resulted in considerable policy change.

3. The description and analysis of this research study contribute to understanding the consultation process and the design of consultation. The analysis of this case identified issues and strategies to be considered when integrating the consultation and policy processes. The strategies addressed staffing, information management, coordination and communication. These findings of this study contribute to the recent research literature on consultation produced by Canadian writers such as Patterson, Lohin, and Ferguson (1992), McMillan & Murgatroyd (1994), Smith and Patterson (1994), and Sterne (1997).

4. The findings of this research study document the trend of increasing complexity in the policy making arena in political settings. In this study, the complexity and interrelatedness of policy issues coupled with the introduction of new policy making structures, such as the Standing Policy Committees, and the government requirement for public consultation have contributed to increasing the complexity of the policy making arena. In this regard the findings support the views of writers such as Sabatier (1988) and Kingdon (1995) who have noted the increasing complexity in the policy making arena. Alberta researchers, such as Montgomerie (1994), have made reference to the increasing complexity in policy environment.

5. The findings of this study offer a concept of policy development which is characterized as complex, politicized, flexible and adaptable, incorporating stakeholder involvement, and including ongoing consultation. This further supports the research of Kingdon (1984) in recognizing the complex and politicized nature of policy making.

Implications for Practice

1. The literature, research studies such as this one, and media reports provide evidence of a continuing trend for the inclusion of consultation as a strategy and process in policy development. As a result, it will be increasingly important for public sector managers and educational leaders to develop an understanding of consultation as a process and of the ways in which consultation can contribute to policy development. This implies the need for professional development programming which provides the opportunity for learning about consultation and for gaining practical experience with a range of consultation designs and activities.

2. Stakeholders including educational administrators, institutional administrators, and other leaders need to understand consultation as it is currently being used by government in policy development for the postsecondary sector. Findings of this study revealed that some stakeholders were uncertain about the consultation process and about ways to effectively participate in the process. Through opportunities to learn more about consultation as a process, stakeholders can develop the skills and confidence required in order to participate effectively in future consultations.

3. An understanding of consultation as a process and the development of consultation skills are becoming critical for leaders and managers in organizations where collaborative governance and consultative strategies are an expected part of the culture of the organization. The increasing expectation for consultation is

indicated as organizations also adopt consultation as a strategy for other decision processes such as strategic planning and budget planning. This increasing expectation for consultation reflects a trend within educational organizations and has implications for the preparation of educational administrators and leaders.

4. To meet the current requirement for knowledge and expertise in policy analysis, universities with graduate programs in educational administration and educational policy studies may wish to review their curriculum and incorporate courses in policy analysis which address emerging approaches to policy inquiry, consultation processes and skills, and strategies to integrate consultation and policy processes.

Implications for Further Research

1. The findings of this study were based on a single case study with a government department and of a specific project in policy development. The available literature which addresses consultation and policy processes based in a Canadian context is still limited. The fields of policy studies and educational administration will benefit from further research on the relationship between consultation and decision making in the policy processes in a Canadian context.

2. The consultation design in this case study incorporated primarily methods which reflected face-to-face presentations and discussions or written submissions and questionnaires. Since then, many electronic means of communication have been widely introduced and have become integrated into our workplaces and daily lives. Further research is warranted into the incorporation of electronic means of communication (i.e., home pages, e-mail, chat rooms, and computer / electronic conferencing) as a means of enhancing stakeholder participation in consultation.

3. Findings from this study showed that learning occurred in many forms, such as individual learning, cooperative learning, and organizational learning. Further

research is required to explore the role that learning can play in the consultation process through the design of the consultation strategy, methods, and materials.

4. An effective organization will demonstrate an alignment among its organizational strategies, processes, and culture. Research focused on organizational culture will be key to identifying the elements of organizational culture necessary to support the consultation strategies, processes, and values in an organization adopting this approach.

Concluding Comment

Increasingly government departments and organizations in the 1990s are engaging in consultation as a strategy for policy development and planning processes. This emerging trend for increased consultation has been most evident in Alberta, but is also occurring across Canada, and in other countries. Consultation represents an important policy development strategy which warrants ongoing research and deserves the attention and concern of organizational leaders and stakeholders to ensure that a fuller understanding of the relationship between consultation and policy development is developed.

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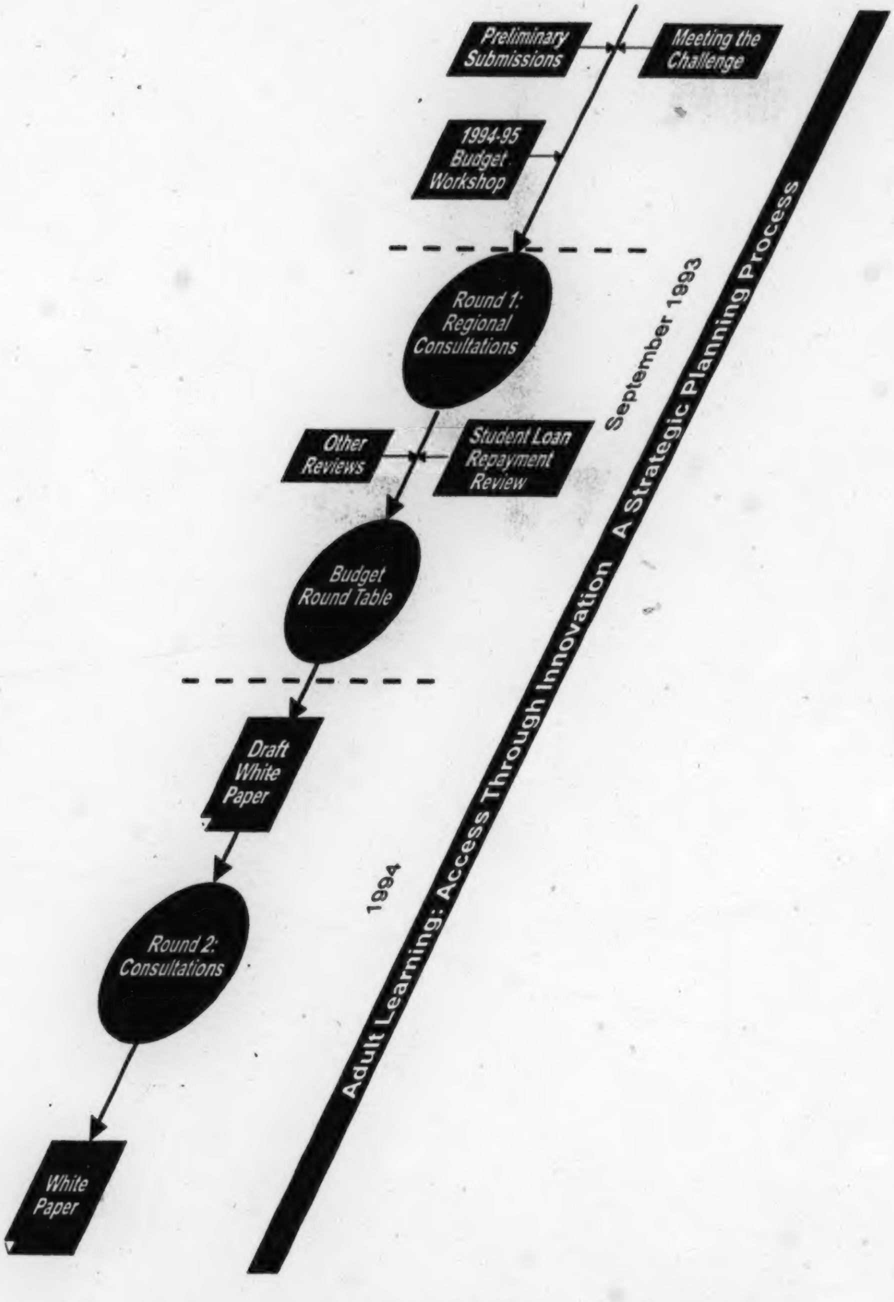
APPENDIX A


Preliminary Submissions
Meeting the Challenge
1994-95 Budget Workshop
Round 1: Regional Consultations
Other Reviews
Student Loan Repayment Review
Budget Round Table
Draft White Paper
Round 2: Consultations
White Paper
September 1993
1994
Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation A Strategic Planning Process

Source: Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. (1994, Summer). *Keeping You Informed.* Edmonton, AB: Author. p. 2.

APPENDIX B

Public Policy and Consultation Process
Chronology of Events

1992

Winter	Minister of Alberta Advanced Education (AAE) is Hon. John Gogo.
	Minister of Alberta Career Development and Employment (AACDE) is Hon. Norm Weiss.
	Deputy Minister AAE initiates activities to begin planning to develop a policy framework within the current social, demographic and economic realities.
May	Provincial government hosts Premier's conference Toward 2000 Together in Calgary. Recommendations also cover aspects of education and training.
	Deputy Minister AAE meets with consultant. This leads to an invitation for consultant to later meet with Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division, to discuss forming a think tank or ideas committee to identify strategic options for the system.
June	Deputy Minister AAE convenes a meeting of senior management and directors of AAE to announce that the Department will formally undertake a strategic planning and public consultation process to produce a policy discussion paper for the Minister.
July	Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division, AAE forms Divisional Task Force of senior AAE staff to begin strategic planning process.
	Deputy Minister AAE meets with institutional Presidents to discuss their issues with the system. Deputy Minister presents fiscal information as well as social and demographic trends and discusses implications.
August	Think tank group or "ideas" committee approved -- members selected.
September	Minister Gogo approves internal Task Force and announces a plan to conduct wide ranging public debate in 1993 on issues and strategic options confronting the post-secondary system in Alberta. He invites public post-secondary institutions to develop briefs on issues and to submit these to the Department.

Deputy Minister AAE begins meetings with senior administration in public post-secondary institutions to provide a fiscal overview and to identify other factors affecting the system and to underscore the serious need for change.

Premier Getty announces resignation as Premier. Leadership race for Progressive Conservative party is soon underway.

October "Ideas" committee holds first meeting. Media labels the group the "secret" committee when Minister does not make the names of committee members public.

Minister Weiss sets up Ministerial Consultative Committee on Labour Market Development and Training with stakeholder perspective from industry, labour, equity groups and training organizations to recommend ways to increase labour market development and training partnerships in Alberta.

December Ralph Klein sworn in as Alberta's 12th Premier. Jack W. Ady is sworn in as Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development (AAECD), the result of a merger of the two former departments.

Work of the "ideas" committee generally concluded by December, 1992. Draft of report submitted. Finalized report by February 1993.

Twenty-five submissions on issues received by AAECD from post-secondary institutions.

Divisional Task Force submits report to Deputy Minister on issues facing the post-secondary system.

1993

February Appointment of Deputy Minister AAECD confirmed as former Deputy Minister of Advanced Education. She proceeds with planning for amalgamated department as well as the strategic planning and public consultation process.

March Communications committee in the Department recommends to the Deputy Minister that a public involvement specialist be hired for the consultation process. A team of consultants is contracted.

Communications committee recommends a structure to manage the public consultation process. A Steering Committee is formed, led by the Deputy Minister. An Operations Committee is established chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Information and Policy Services. Strategic Operations

	continues. Task groups develop as needed. Secretariat formed to provide support to committees. A department manager is named Project Coordinator to implement day to day decisions. Consultation workshop in Calgary is hosted by Ministerial Consultative Committee on Labour Market Development and Training. The Committee report is prepared for Minister Ady.
April	Premier Klein introduces his economic development strategy for Alberta. Minister Ady announces review of student loan repayment system.
April - June	Operations Committee (Assistant Deputy Minister-Information and Policy Services) and Steering Committee work through details of the public consultation strategy. Strategic Options committee (Assistant Deputy Minister-Institutional Support) works to integrate information and to develop possible options for the system.
May	Provincial Treasurer Jim Dinning delivers Budget speech and announces that the government will implement a three-year budgeting process. Minister Ady makes first public announcement of public consultation process: *Adult Learning -- Access through Innovation* project. Background information to be sent to Albertans in summer. A review to be done through meetings and written input. Roundtable discussions with stakeholders will consider strategic responses. Premier Klein calls a provincial election for mid-June.
June	Visioning Team is established in the Department to develop vision and mission statements and to report to Executive Committee by November 1. Klein is elected Premier in provincial election. Ady confirmed again as Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.
July	Fiscal Planning Workshop for institutional stakeholders is organized by AAECD and held in Edmonton on July 22-23. Two administrative representatives and two Board of Governors representatives from each public post-secondary institution invited and asked for input in advance to allow for agenda development. This public consultation is in response to Provincial Treasurer's call for Roundtables. Budget cutbacks for AAECD expected to be 15% or more over three years. Operations Committee continues planning for public consultation. Concerns in the Department that consultation will be overshadowed by

	budget workshop and development of the three-year business plan.
August	Students request meeting with Minister Ady and want to be directly involved with the consultation process. Minister sets up a roundtable meeting with representatives of post-secondary student associations.
September	Moderator is identified for Round two of the consultation process. Minister wants a public face to lead that phase of the consultation. Moderator observes some Round One consultation meetings and later participates in the Budget Roundtable sessions. Deputy Minister invites institutions to submit suggestions for changes in legislation affecting the system. Undertakes a legislative review. Several other working groups are set up to follow-up on recommendations coming from the Fiscal Planning Workshop. A comprehensive public consultation Information package is prepared and distributed to nearly 10,000 stakeholders or those interested in *the Adult Learning: Access through Innovation* project. Print and radio campaign to advertise Round One of the consultation -- open public meetings in various locations throughout the province during the weeks of Sept 27 to Oct 14. Newsletter "Keeping You Informed" outlines the process. Training of the Departmental staff underway for the consultation meetings. Senior staff of the department participate in the consultation meetings as resource persons.
September - October	Round One consultation meetings held throughout the province. Thirteen regional meetings and four outreach meetings are held throughout Alberta attracting more than 1300 Albertans, the majority of whom made presentations at the meetings and later submitted written position papers. Departmental staff consultation held one week after the last Round One Meeting. Computerized data base established to track information received through written submissions and presentations and through discussion at the consultation sessions. 475 written submissions received in Round One.
November	Invitations sent out for Budget Roundtable in Calgary Nov 19-20. Workbooks sent to 150 participants as well as the mail list. Second newsletter "Keeping You Informed" is sent to all on mailing list.

	Budget Roundtable facilitated by a team of management consultants.
	Visioning Team presents a report to Departmental Executive Committee. Vision statement is accepted and passed along to writing teams to be incorporated into later documents.
December	Minister Ady announces that a summary of the Budget Roundtable meetings is available. Sent out to all on mail list.
	AAECD submits and re-submits three-year business plan to Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning and then to Treasury Board.

1994

January - March	Draft White Paper is prepared. Process includes senior management retreat and the development of theme papers.
March	Draft White Paper is reviewed by Standing Policy Committee on Financial Affairs and by Cabinet and Caucus before release.
	Minister announces the Moderator for Round Two Consultation. The Draft White Paper, *Agenda For Change*, is released and mailed to all on mail list.
	Written responses to the Draft White Paper requested from the public.
April	Minister announces changes for the repayment of student loans.
May	Second round of consultation meetings held in Edmonton, May 2-3, and Calgary, May 5-6, with a diverse group of stakeholders representing those who deliver programs and those who receive them. A total of 150 invited to each meeting.
	Department staff consultation held a week later.
	400 written submissions received in Round Two.
May - October	Final White Paper is prepared.
June	Minister Ady announces the Access Fund and its Advisory Committee members. The Department business plan called for the creation of a $47 million Access Fund intended to finance innovative, cost-effective methods for increasing Albertan's access to quality learning. A schedule for the submission of proposals and a set of guidelines are provided.

July	Final "Keeping You Informed" newsletter includes the Moderator's report of What We Heard. Mailed to all on mail list.
September - October	Minister Ady takes the White Paper to the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning for review and approval.
	Minister Ady goes to Cabinet and then Caucus to get approval for the White Paper.
October	White Paper, *New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta*, is released. Minister Ady tables the document in the Legislature on October 20, 1994.

APPENDIX C

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

Terms of Reference
for the
Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation
Steering Committee

The Project -- Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation

In support of its commitment to promote a lifelong learning society in Alberta, the Government through a process of public consultation and strategic planning will inform Albertans by Spring 1994, of the policies, principles, and strategic plans that will guide the development of adult learning into the 21st century.

Name of the Committee:

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation -- Steering Committee

Mission Statement:

The Steering Committee will provide leadership and direction in formulating a policy framework and strategic plan for the development of a system of adult learning in Alberta.

Terms of Reference:

It is the responsibility of the Steering Committee to

1. Examine the authorities and objectives under which adult education and learning is provided in Alberta;
2. Examine the system by which adult education is provided in Alberta with the view to identifying strengths and weaknesses, isolating issues and describing impediments to effective and efficient educational program and service delivery to adult Albertans;
3. Engage in a process (or processes) of public consultation to inform the development of a policy framework and strategic plan for a system of adult learning in Alberta;
4. Establish and empower the structures required to accomplish the mission of the Steering Committee;
5. Provide the purpose, policy direction, guidance, and approvals necessary for these structures to achieve their objectives;
6. Secure and allocate the resources necessary to carry out the mission of the Steering Committee;

7. Advise the Minister, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, on a regular basis of the progress toward the accomplishment of the mission;

8. Ensure the fostering of positive relationships through effective and regular communication with all stakeholders in the process;

9. Recommend for the consideration and approval of the Minister and Cabinet a rationale and framework of policy alternatives, principles, definitions, and role statements, that will guide the development of a system of adult learning in Alberta;

10. Develop and recommend for the consideration and approval of the Minister and Cabinet a three-year business plan for adult learning in Alberta that includes the following:
    - a) a specific discussion of the "business" of the department including an examination of the appropriateness of its various programs;
    - b) long-term goals and program objectives;
    - c) specific performance and results measurements;
    - d) spending estimates that are consistent with the government's financial plan and multi-year funding targets.

Structure:

1. The Steering Committee is made up of the following members:
    - a) Deputy Minister
    - b) Assistant Deputy Minister, Institutional Support;
    - c) Executive Director, Apprenticeship and Industry Training Division;
    - d) Assistant Deputy Minister, Information and Policy Services;
    - e) Chief Executive Officer, Students Finance Board;
    - f) Director, Communications Branch
    - g) Chairman, Project Secretariat;
    - h) Representative Alberta Education.

2. The Steering Committee is responsible to the Minister, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development.

3. The Deputy Minister will chair the Steering Committee.

Method of Operation:

1. The Steering Committee will meet as frequently as necessary to provide direction, clarification, and approvals to its appointed standing committees and sub-committees.

2. Standing committees (Operations Committee and Secretariat) and sub-committees will be established with specific responsibilities and authorities for accomplishing objectives and assignments set by the Steering Committee.

3. Private consultants may be contracted to assist with any aspect of the project as determined by the Steering Committee.

4. Minutes of all meeting of the Steering Committee and other committees will be recorded and circulated. A log of all proceedings of the project will be compiled at the end of the process.

Timeline:

1. The Steering Committee will submit its final report with detailed recommendations for a policy framework and strategic plan for a system of adult learning for Alberta to the Minister on or before April 1, 1994.

June 9, 1993

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

Terms of Reference
for the
Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation
Operations Committee

The Project -- Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation

In support of its commitment to promote a lifelong learning society in Alberta, the Government through a process of public consultation and strategic planning will inform Albertans by Spring 1994, of the policies, principles, and strategic plans that will guide the development of adult learning into the 21st century.

Name of the Committee:

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation -- Operations Committee

Mission Statement:

Guided by the policy directions and terms of reference of the Steering Committee, the Operations Committee is responsible for determining, managing, and implementing the activities necessary for the development and production of a policy framework and strategic plan for a system of adult learning in Alberta.

Terms of Reference:

It is the responsibility of the Operations Committee to

1. Manage the day to day operations of the project within the guidelines established by the policy directions of the Steering Committee;
2. Prepare action plans for implementing the policy direction of the Steering Committee for its review and approval;
3. Make day to day decisions necessary for implementing the activities detailed in the Committee's approved action plans;
4. Prepare and recommend policy alternatives concerning the direction and conduct of the project for consideration by the Steering Committee as well as background materials, issue analysis, strategic options or other tasks requested by the Steering Committee;
5. Anticipate and identify process or other issues of concern and, as necessary, bring them to the attention of the Steering Committee;

6. Communicate with and provide operational direction to process consultants or others who may be engaged to assist with the project;

7. Manage the expenditure of funds and the assignment of staff support within the guidelines established by the Steering Committee;

8. Draft and recommend (in cooperation with the Project Secretariat) for the review and approval of the Steering Committee, the following papers/ reports:
    a) the Profile and Trends document;
    b) the "New Directions" document;
    c) the consultation document (options paper);
    d) the final report of the public consultation process; and
    e) the final project report to the Minister that will include the policy framework document and the strategic plan for implementation.

Structure:

1. The Operations Committee is made up of the following members:
    a) Assistant Deputy Minister, Information and Policy Services;
    b) Assistant Deputy Minister, Institutional Support;
    c) Director, Communications Branch;
    d) Director, Legislative Services;
    e) Director, Community Programs Branch;
    f) Chairman, Project Secretariat;
    g) Director, Program Development, Students Finance Board;
    h) Representative, Information and Policy Services Branch;
    I) Representative, Communications Branch; and
    j) Project Coordinator.

2. The Steering Committee is responsible to the Chair of the Steering Committee.

3. The Assistant Deputy Minister, Information and Policy Services, will chair the Operations Committee.

Method of Operation:

1. The Operations Committee will meet as frequently as necessary to provide the management services required for the day to day decisions necessary for carrying out its operational plans;

2. The Operations Committee will prepare detailed operational plans for the conduct of the project within the policy direction and with the approval of the Steering Committee;

3. The Committee will work directly with private consultants contracted to assist with any aspect of the project;

4. The work of the Operations Committee will be carried out in a timely fashion; members are to consider committee tasks, assignments and responsibilities as their first priority;

5. The Operations Committee will supervise and provide direction for the Project Coordinator;

6. Minutes of all meeting of the Operations Committee and other committees will be recorded and circulated.

June 9, 1993

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

Terms of Reference
for the
Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation
Project Secretariat

The Project -- Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation

In support of its commitment to promote a lifelong learning society in Alberta, the Government through a process of public consultation and strategic planning will inform Albertans by Spring 1994, of the policies, principles, and strategic plans that will guide the development of adult learning into the 21st century.

Name of the Committee:

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation -- Project Secretariat

Mission Statement:

The Project Secretariat will provide research, analytical, and advisory support to the Steering and Operations Committees throughout the public consultation and strategic planning processes.

Terms of Reference:

It is the responsibility of the project Secretariat to

1. Summarize, analyze and codify stakeholder submissions, departmental papers, public presentations/submissions, or other relevant informational reports made during the public consultation process(es);

2. Undertake research projects in support of the consultation and strategic planning processes;

3. Provide information, analyses, and advice as requested or as appropriate to project committees in support of the policy framework and strategic planning processes;

4. Communicate with the process consultants on all matters related to the structuring, analysis, and presentation of information derived throughout the consultation process;

5. Draft for review of the Operations Committee and approval of the Steering Committee papers and reports that will include the following: (working titles)
    a) New Directions for Adult Learning;
    b) Profiles and Trends in Adult Learning in Alberta;
    c) Options Paper (Consultation document);

d) Final report of the consultation process;
e) Policy framework and strategic action plan.

Structure:

1. The Project Secretariat is made up of the following members:
   a) Director, Post-secondary Information and Policy;
   b) Representatives, Information and Policy Services/ Institutional Support, and others as determined by the Chair.

2. The Project Secretariat is responsible to the Chair of the Operations Committee.

3. The Director, Research and Information, will chair the Project Secretariat.

Method of Operation:

1. The Project Secretariat will meet as frequently as necessary to provide the informational and research support in response to requests from the Steering and Operations Committees.

2. The Project Secretariat will adopt a flexible organizational structure and membership that is adaptable to the nature of the assignments from the Steering and Operations Committees.

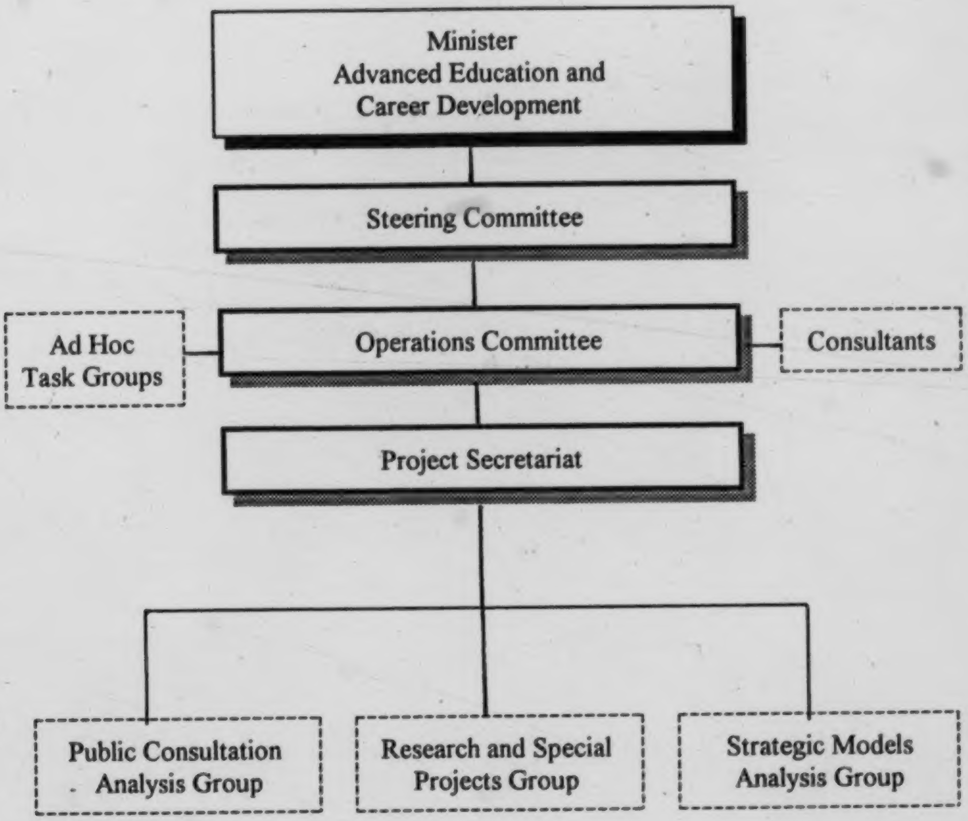
3. The Project Secretariat will provide regular updates on the status of its activities to the Operations Committee.

June 9, 1993

APPENDIX D

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation

Project Organization


Minister
Advanced Education and
Career Development
Steering Committee
Ad Hoc
Task Groups
Operations Committee
Consultants
Project Secretariat
Public Consultation
Analysis Group
Research and Special
Projects Group
Strategic Models
Analysis Group

June 18, 1993

APPENDIX E

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation

Statement of Objectives

Introduction

Action is urgently required if Alberta is to remain a prosperous and competitive province. The way we do business and create wealth has fundamentally changed. The pairing of knowledgeable and skilled workers with intelligent machines adds value and produces goods and services of remarkable quality and variety. The skills workers possess can become obsolete rapidly, creating a need for regular renewal of skills. A major government initiative, resulting recently in the Report on Alberta's Economic Future: Toward 2000 Together, makes it clear that the education and training of our workforce is an important factor in determining Alberta's ability to meet the demands of a global, competitive economy. In our rapidly changing economic and social environment, learning must continue throughout life as new skills are required to meet new conditions.

Advanced Education and Career Development is currently responsible for a full range of programs for adults in the province in support of developing our human resources. The challenge of ensuring lifelong learning opportunities, however, does not rest with government alone. Fundamental change in roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders will be necessary to provide the most efficient and effective adult learning system possible in an environment of fiscal restraint and constant global change.

There is now an urgent need for a new direction for adult learning in the province, a direction built on strong principles, guided by clear, well-defined goals and supported by the people of Alberta. *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation* is a strategic planning process to involve Albertans in defining this direction. The mission for adult learning in Alberta is a commitment to life-long learning opportunities for adult Albertans that reflect agreed upon principles, are responsive to social, cultural and economic needs, are affordable for learners, employers and taxpayers, and where providers and learners are accountable for outcomes. The goal of the strategic planning process, consistent with this mission, is to increase access and the responsiveness of our education and training system, and to improve efficiency and effectiveness wile controlling costs through innovative approaches.

Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation will involve the public in the development of a policy framework and action plan that will guide the future of adult learning in Alberta into the 21st century. It contains an open process of consultation with clients, stakeholders, and the public. It will include a number of separate but linked initiatives, all contributing to the affirmation of a common mission for adult learning, and the identification of appropriate strategies and innovative approaches to serve that mission. The process of consultation will continue throughout the implementation of the action plan.

Overall Objectives and Outcomes for *Adult Learning: Access Through Innovation*

Goal - The goal of the strategic planning process is to increase access to learning opportunities and to increase the responsiveness of Alberta's post-secondary education and training system, wile reducing costs through innovative approaches.

Objectives - The purpose of the public consultation project is to:

1. Affirm a common mission for adult learning and the identification of appropriate strategies to serve that mission;

2. Develop a policy framework and action plan to guide operational planning for the systematic restructuring of adult learning in Alberta over the next decade;

3. Establish new working relationships and define new roles for Government, the Department, students, public institutions, the private sector, communities, and the public;

4. Earn support for the plan from stakeholders and the public, through their participation in its development and implementation; and

5. Maintain an on-going consultative approach which will continue to advise the department during the implementation and operation phases of the action plan.

Outcomes - In the Spring of 1994, the Minister will:

1. Release a public report on the progress of the consultative processes to date;

2. Recommend for Cabinet approval a policy framework to guide the development of adult learning in Alberta for the next decade that will include:
   a) policy statements
   b) vision, values, and principles, and
   c) a definition of roles;

3. Recommend for Cabinet approval an action plan for fundamental change of adult learning in Alberta;

4. In response to the Provincial Treasurer's direction, the Department will submit to Cabinet for their consideration and approval, a three-year business plan for the Department that reflects the policy framework and action plan, and that will include:
   a) a definition of the "business" of the Department and an examination of the appropriateness of the Department's programs;
   b) long term goals and program objectives,
   c) specific performance goals and objectives, and
   d) spending estimates that are consistent with the government's financial goals and multi-year funding targets.

Components of the Process

The Departmental planning process will incorporate the public consultation activities through:

a) the analysis of information derived from the consultations,
b) the preparation of summary and discussion documents for use in the consultation,
c) the preparation of a detailed action plan based on the directions identified by the consultations and by the requirement to maintain a comprehensive, effective and financially sustainable adult learning system.

1. **Direction Consultation with the Public** - A series of regional consultation meetings and roundtables will be held in the fall of 1993 to provide an opportunity for the Department to inform the public of critical trends and issues, to affirm a common mission for adult learning, and to identify strategic options for achieving the mission. The consultation will be divided into two rounds:

   a) Round 1 - (Regional consultation meetings)
   - Provide information to the public regarding the context of adult learning in Alberta and the implications of future challenges;
   - Identify the preferences of the public for future directions of the system.

   b) Round 2 - (Options Roundtables)
   - Examine and react to a discussion document containing strategic directions and options suggested by participants in Round 1, through written submissions, and other relevant documents;
   - Identify activities and initiatives currently in place which might be integrated into coordinated strategies;
   - Identify consistencies in preferred approaches among stakeholders; and
   - Identify the basis for differing opinion on approaches to be addressed during implementation.

2. **Associated Consultative Processes with Stakeholders** - Other activities will be used to provide information to the planning process and to contribute to enhancing the credibility of the process, the Department's legitimacy as a coordinating agency, and the support of stakeholders for the outcomes. Such activities include:

   a) Submissions from post-secondary institutions and other concerned stakeholders solicited and received in response to the Department's call for input in the Fall of 1992;

   b) Examination and analysis of the relevant documents such as the final report from Toward 2000 Together, the final report of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Labour Market Development and Training, and the Alberta Human Resource Development Plan;

   c) A workshop on institutional budgets in which the administration of all post-secondary institutions will provide input into the 1994-95 budget strategies;

   d) A roundtable on the Department budget at which the administration of all public post-secondary institutions, student and faculty associations and other stakeholders will provide input into an interim business plan to meet three-year targets;

   e) Regional consultations with the private sector in increasing private sector investment in training;

   f) The review to identify options for improving flexibility in the student loan repayment system; and

   g) The review of regulations process to be undertaken by the Department.

Specific Objectives for the Direct Consultation with the Public

Public Meetings and Written Submissions

1. The **objectives** of the public meetings (Round 1) of the consultation are:
   - to establish credibility of the consultation process;
   - to provide information to the public on adult learning in Alberta, and the challenges which must be faced; and
   - to provide a forum for members of the public to identify issues of relevance and propose strategies and directions for addressing the challenges.

2. The **outcomes** of the public meetings are expected to be:
   - a public which is better informed about the issues in adult learning;
   - a planning process that is better informed about public attitudes toward adult learning;
   - a summary of reactions, issues, themes, strategies and directions proposed or supported by participants; and
   - a positive response to Round 1 of the consultation as evidenced by:
     -support for continuation of the process;
     -level of participation in the public meetings; and
     -expressed interest in participating in Round 2, the options roundtables.

3. **Specific activities** for achieving these outcomes will include:
   - readily accessible background documents;
   - a newsletter that will keep the public informed of the process and outcomes to date;
   - widely advertised public forums that are structured to allow:
     - "context presentations to set the stage at each forum;
     -a hospitable environment for the presentation of ideas;
     -question and answer sessions between the consultation panel and presenters; and
     -discussion at the conclusion of presentations and summary ('this is what we heard').
   - analysis of data to:
     -report on possible trends in the information presented;
     -add new issues of relevance; and
     -to identify divergent opinion.

4. There will be two **products** at the conclusion of Round 1:
   - rolling summaries of public input for use by the Department as data in the presentation of the "Options Paper" for Round 2; and
   - a summary of Round 1, "This is what we heard", prepared by the consultant for release to the public.

Options Roundtables and Written Submissions

1. The **objectives** of the options roundtables (Round 2) of the consultation are:
   - to maintain the credibility of the consultation process;
   - to bring together informed stakeholders to examine the discussion document containing strategic directions and options suggested in the first round of consultation; and
   - to provide a forum for stakeholders to discuss options and their implications.

2. The **outcomes** of the roundtables are expected to be:

- a sense of ownership and partnership among stakeholders that their concerns are being considered;
- a summary of preferred options; and
- a positive response to the summary of roundtable results.

3. **Specific activities** for achieving these outcomes will include:
   - the availability and provision (on request) of all background documents;
   - a newsletter that will keep the public informed of the process and outcomes to date;
   - roundtables of invited stakeholder representatives and others who ask to participate that are designed to allow:
     -a structured discussion of options,
     -a hospitable environment for the presentation of ideas, and
     -daily recap by the moderator ('this is what we heard');
   - analysis of data to:
     -report on possible trends in the information presented,
     -add new issues of relevance,
     -identify divergent opinion, and
     -to identify possible contending positions.

4. There will be three **products** at the conclusion of Round 2:
   - a summary of Round 2 "This is what we heard", prepared by the consultant and a statement of 'next steps' prepared by the Department for release to the public; and
   - an analysis of roundtable results for use by the Department in development the Policy Framework and Action Plan.

Draft September 17, 1993

APPENDIX F

STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE
on Financial Planning

The role or mandate of the Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning is to consider budgetary and taxation matters; to develop long range policy directions and priorities for the government including implementation and communications strategies; to hear public submissions and meet with delegates from business, industry, commerce and education; and to review the budgets of the departments of Treasury, Education, Advanced Education and Career Development, and Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. The Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning has a total of 17 members with seven of those as Cabinet Ministers.

The Standing Policy Committee structure was introduced by the Klein government after coming to power in December, 1992. Four Standing Policy Committees were created: one on Community Services, one on Natural Resources and Sustainable Development, one on Agriculture and Rural Development, and one on Financial Planning. Each committee is chaired by a member of caucus and consisted of approximately five to seven cabinet ministers and of several caucus members. The Premier is an ex-officio member of each committee. Each Standing Policy Committee reviews long range policy directions and budgets for a group of government departments. The Standing Policy Committee on Financial Planning reviews those matters for the department of Advanced Education and Career Development.

05/95